

METAPHORS OF THE SEA

A Critical Study of Five Anglo-Saxon Poems

. by

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**Submitted to the Department of English
in fulfilment of the requirements
for the Degree of Master of Arts
University of Cape Town
September 1974**

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For my mother and father

in reverence gratitude and love

PREFACE

The object of this thesis is to contribute to the appreciation of five selected Anglo-Saxon poems--The Wanderer, The Seafarer, Exodus, Andreas, and Beowulf--by analysing their metaphoric use of the sea.

Metaphor is an essential and distinctive element of all poetry and, to be genuine, to be alive, and to be ever-interesting, a poem must achieve itself through metaphor. A poem's unique mode of vision is metaphoric, and whatever it communicates we perceive in and through metaphor. This is an axiomatic tenet of the criticism of modern poetry. But criticism of Anglo-Saxon poetry, if it bases its insights on a detailed reference to metaphor, must justify itself on theoretical grounds.

Consequently, the introductory chapter of this thesis is a brief discussion of some of the important and interesting issues concerning the nature of Anglo-Saxon poetry itself, and it has two aims. Its first aim is to outline the basic assumptions of this thesis: that, for cultural reasons, descriptions of the sea in an Anglo-Saxon poem have a vigorous figurative significance; that extant Anglo-Saxon poetry is generally a sophisticated literary achievement and susceptible of modern critical approaches; that an Anglo-Saxon poem can be analysed by itself, since it has its own life, independent of other extant Anglo-Saxon poems; and that an Anglo-Saxon poem has its own coherent and individual thematic structure, i.e., its intrinsic organisation and its relation to society at large have a unique imaginative harmony. Some ancient

and modern theories of poetic metaphor are also sketched in this chapter, and a working definition is reached which includes a metaphoric vehicle consisting of a whole cluster of related sea-images.

The second aim of the introductory chapter is to explain more fully the basic, deductive method of this thesis. The general principle of this thesis is that a poem's metaphors participate in its total thematic structure; the hypothesis is that narrationally important sea-passages in an Anglo-Saxon poem function as metaphoric vehicles. And it is with working out, exploring, and illustrating the consequence of this hypothesis that the remaining chapters of the present study are concerned. They demonstrate that the facts of the poem fit this hypothesis. They do not attempt, of course, to prove the truth of the hypothesis, for that would be merely arguing in a circle. In any event, criticism of poetry does not set out to prove anything; it seeks merely to interpret and to enrich the infinitely interesting epoch of human life. The remaining chapters will have succeeded, therefore, if they show that this way of looking at the marine imagery in the five selected Anglo-Saxon poems can lead to new and productive readings of these poems.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I should like to thank Professor D. L. Cavers who, with graciousness and patience, first taught me to read Anglo-Saxon. I thank her, too, for her counsel always ready. A great debt of gratitude must also go to my supervisor, Mr J. E. van der Westhuizen (winedryhten), for watching over me not only as a research student but also as an undergraduate, as a junior colleague, and as a younger man.

The following former teachers and senior colleagues will know that I am grateful to them for their helpful leads, comments, and suggestions: Mr B. S. Lee, Professor J. Opland of the University of Durban-Westville, and Associate Professor G. O. Roberts (beoden gebungen) of the Memorial University of St Johns, Newfoundland.

I should also like to thank Associate Professor L. Baumbach and Mrs A. James, both of the Department of Classics, who shared with me their enjoyment of Latin.

To Mrs M. N. S. Shackleton and her competent staff of the Inter-Library Loans Department of the University Library go my thanks for supplying my many practical needs, and especially to Mrs E. B. Leraar and Mrs R. Swade, memorable for their good spirit. I wish to express, too, my gratitude to the Roman Catholic Church of Cape Town for permission to use its collection of Migne's Patrologiae, which is kept in the Grimley Library, Cathedral Place, 12 Bouquet Street, Cape Town. I also gratefully acknowledge the grant of fifty rands from the University Research Committee.

But there is a special purchase on my appreciation,
a tribute to my wife, Maryth, the perfect helper (Metodes meowle)
and the most accurate, encouraging, and tireless critic I have.
All that she so generously gave to this thesis--as if the typing
of it were not enough--makes it a work truly ours.

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ABBREVIATIONS

All documental abbreviations used in this thesis may be found expanded in the 'Master List and Table of Abbreviations' of any volume of the 1971 MLA International Bibliography of Books and Articles on the Modern Languages and Literatures, comp. Harrison T. Meserole, et al. (New York: MLA, 1973), with the exception of the following:

- | | |
|-------------|---|
| <u>ASPR</u> | The Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records: A Collective Edition. Referred to by vol. and l.
I <u>The Junius Manuscript</u>
II <u>The Vercelli Book</u>
III <u>The Exeter Book</u>
IV <u>Beowulf and Judith</u>
V <u>The Paris Psalter and the Meters of Boethius</u>
VI <u>The Anglo-Saxon Minor Poems</u> |
| <u>BTD</u> | <u>An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary</u> . Ed. J. Bosworth and T. N. Toller |
| <u>ETS</u> | <u>An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary: Supplement</u> . T. N. Toller |
| <u>CL</u> | <u>Corpus Christianorum</u> . Series Latina. Referred to by vol. and p. |
| <u>HEGA</u> | Bede's <u>Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum</u> |
| <u>HMD</u> | <u>A Concise Anglo-Saxon Dictionary</u> . Ed. J. R. C. Hall, with suppl. by H. D. Meritt |
| <u>ICL</u> | Loeb Classical Library. London: Heinemann, 1912- |
| NS | New Series |
| OS | Original Series |
| <u>PG</u> | <u>Patrologiae Cursus Completus . . .</u> Series Graeca, Latine tantum edita. Referred to by vol. and col. |
| <u>PL</u> | <u>Patrologiae Cursus Completus . . .</u> Series Latina. Referred to by vol. and col. |

The source of all Latin quotations from the Bible is Biblia Sacra iuxta Vulgatam Clementinam, ed. Alberto Colunga and Laurentio Turrado, Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos (Madrid: Editorial católica, 1946). In Latin texts, ligatured a and e are separated, and consonantal u is replaced by v. Anglo-Saxon inflexions are occasionally altered to conform with the grammar of a Modern English sentence.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTORY

MARINE FIGURATION IN ANGLO-SAXON POETRY

In order to understand something of the significance of the sea in an Anglo-Saxon poem it is necessary to sketch some of the dominant cultural attitudes to the sea. Some of these attitudes are pagan, others patristic, and others a blend of both, owing to the religious background of the Anglo-Saxons on the Continent and in England: the Anglo-Saxon Church had Celtic foundations.

The Britain that the Anglo-Saxon tribes invaded was a complex of cultures, some of which had prevailed in the millennia of obscure prehistory, others in the last few centuries before the birth of Christ, and others in the first few centuries after it. From about the fifth century B.C. until Caesar began his Gallic campaigns, the Celts were the most powerful nation in Europe.¹ According to Caesar, they were a grotesque sight in battle, their bodies decorated with blue war-paint.² One Celtic tribe, the Veneti, greatly impressed him with their well-equipped and sturdy ships, expert seamanship, and complete control of the sea-routes in the Atlantic between Brittany and Britain. And, had it not been for a sudden change of wind, the Veneti might have routed

¹ Nora Chadwick, The Celts (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970), pp. 41-42.

² Caesar, The Gallic War, Bk 5.14, trans. H. J. Edwards, LCL (1917), p. 252.

Caesar's fleet. Instead, as Caesar puts it: 'Quo proelio bellum Venetorum totiusque orae maritimae confectum est.'³ The Celts received British aid in this battle, there being free communication between the Celts and the Britons. Indeed, by the time Claudius arrived there, in A.D. 43, Britain was thoroughly Celticised. Even after three centuries of Roman administration, the Celts of Britain managed to preserve their cultural integrity (Chadwick, p. 70). Some of the surviving Veneti jumped into the sea, preferring death by water rather than at the hands of the victorious Romans.⁴

Though it seems more likely that they simply thought it a chance of escape, there may be in this act a connection with the ritual decimation by Saxon pirates of their prisoners:

praeterea, priusquam de continenti in patriam vela
laxantes hostico mordaces anchoras vado vellant,
mos est remeaturis decimum quemque captorum per
aquaes et cruciarias poenas plus ob hoc tristi
quod superstitioso ritu necare superque collectam
turbam periturorum mortis iniquitatem sortis
aequitate dispergere. talibus se ligant votis,
victimis solvunt; et per huiusmodi non tam
sacrificia purgati quam sacrilegia polluti
religiosum putant caedis infaustae perpetratores
de capite captivo magis exigere tormenta quam
pretia. 5

The religion of the Celts was based on the worship of Nature. The

³ 'This engagement finished the campaign against the Veneti and the whole sea-coast.' Ibid., Bk 3.13-16, pp. 158 and 159.

⁴ Dio Cassius, Dio's Roman History, Bk 39.40-43, trans. Earnest Cary, LCL, III (1914), 366-73.

⁵ Moreover, when ready to unfurl their sails for the voyage home from the continent and to lift their gripping anchors from enemy waters, they are accustomed on the eve of departure to kill one in ten of their prisoners by drowning or crucifixion, performing a rite which is all the more tragic for being due to superstition, and distributing to the collected band of doomed men the iniquity of death by the equity of the lot. Such are the obligations of their vows, and such the victims with which they pay their obligations. Polluting themselves by such sacrilege

Celts worshipped animals, especial deities being the boar (represented on helmets and weapons), the bear, the bull, the horse, and the serpent (often depicted with a ram's head). They associated the serpent with the underworld.⁶ In addition, divine reverence was paid not only to the earth, hills and mountains, trees and forests, as well as to springs and rivers, wells and lakes, but also to the sea:

the sea itself was personified, but . . . it and its waves were regarded as hostile to man, and they were attacked with weapons by Celtic warriors, both on the continent and in Ireland. But the sea had also a more kindly aspect, its waves moaning for the deaths of men, or their sound having prophetic aspects. (Ibid., p. 16)

The most prominent Celtic sea-god was Manannan, son of Ler ('sea'). He is not only the master of the waves, either riding them--waves are called 'the son of Ler's horses'--or driving a chariot over them, but is himself also a great sea-wave (ibid., pp. 44-45). Belief in Manannan was strongly prevalent as late as the seventh century A.D., the period of the Sutton Hoo burial (Chadwick, p. 174), and a voyage to an afterworld was a common belief in Celtic literature.⁷

rather than purifying themselves by such sacrifices, the perpetrators of that unhallowed slaughter think it a religious duty to exact torture rather than ransom from a prisoner.

Sidonius, Poems and Letters, Bk 8.6.15, trans. W. B. Anderson, LCL, II (1965), 430-33; also cited by H. R. Ellis Davidson, Gods and Myths of Northern Europe (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1964), p. 129.

⁶ J. A. MacCulloch, The Celtic and Scandinavian Religions, Hutchinson's Univ. Library, No. 10 (London: Hutchinson, [1948]), pp. 13-19. I am also indebted here and elsewhere to Rhea T. Workman's absorbing discussion of Teutonic religion in Chs 2 and 3 of her unpub. diss. (South Carolina 1958), 'The Concept of Hell in Anglo-Saxon Poetry before A.D. 850.'

⁷ R. T. Farrell, 'Beowulf, Swedes and Geats,' Saga-Book of the Viking Society for Northern Research, 18, No. 3 (1972), 280, n. 112.

By about A.D. 200 the Gospel reached Britain, though how it did so is not known. Christianity had made some progress among the Celts by the fifth century, but it remained an aristocratic, minority religion in Roman Britain: paganism continued, in Cornwall at any rate, into the sixth century (Chadwick, pp. 190-92). The real impact of Christianity upon the Celts in the British Isles occurred at the beginning of the fifth century, when the zeal for asceticism had spread to the Western Mediterranean. In the fifth century, several British churchmen brought monastic Christianity from the island of Lerins back to their homeland where it attracted their countrymen.⁸

The deployment of the heathen Anglo-Saxon settlers throughout south-eastern Britain did not affect the Church which was in the north and west. But, through the mission of Pope Gregory and the subsequent royal links between Northumbria and Kent, the British Church in Wales and Cornwall became cut off from Roman Christianity and found itself conservatively orthodox and exclusive (Chadwick, pp. 194-95). Consequently, the Welsh Church 'passes out of the main stream of the history of religion and culture in England,'⁹ though this is not to say that its existence, in the west, may be forgotten.

On the other hand, the Irish Church eschewed the exclusiveness of the Welsh insofar as by the end of the sixth century there were many evangelical monasteries in Ireland and, from St Columba's Iona, energetic Irish missionaries, including some 'religious

⁸ R. H. Hodgkin, A History of the Anglo-Saxons (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1935), I, 247.

⁹ John Godfrey, The Church in Anglo-Saxon England (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1962), p. 44.

wanderers who took to the sea to drift or sail wherever God might direct them,' carried the Faith to England (Hodgkin, pp. 250-52). The repatriated royal exiles must also have been an influence on Northumbrian culture since, according to Bede, Edwin, Oswald, Oswy, and Aldfrith had all lived among the Celts. Wherever they were founded, Irish monasteries became both missionary headquarters and centres of learning. Soon Ireland stood the beacon of scholasticism and culture in Western Europe (Hodgkin, p. 255). It was thanks to Irish generosity that English scholarship flourished, and the traffic of scholars and books between Ireland and England was a busy one (Godfrey, p. 205). The Irish Church, then, promoted a monasticism less extreme and isolative than that of the Welsh Church. But with it went a faith more eclectic, since

Mingling with it were . . . unusual strains of thought; sometimes derived darkly from ideas of magic, from worship of the elements, from Druidism buried deep in the inmost recesses of the Celtic mind; sometimes manifesting themselves in sympathies with the animal world or in ecstatic adoration of the forces of nature.

(Hodgkin, loc. cit.)

These 'mysteries of the Celtic soul' are best seen in hymns of the Irish Church. For instance, in one of St Patrick's 'the devil who lies behind all the fear is "The Dragon, great, most foul, terrible and old"--a monster ready to take the place of the Teutonic dragons which had brought Beowulf and the heathen heroes into action' (Hodgkin, pp. 256-57).

While the Anglo-Saxon occupation was continuing, then, there was being established in the north of England a strong Christian force, characterised by evangelistic enthusiasm, religious dedication, love of learning, and a slight strain of atavistic paganism--all subsumed in 'the tradition of propaganda' (ibid., p. 257). Small wonder that this force made so large and lasting

an impression on English Christianity.

The Angles, Saxons, and Jutes were products of the pagan Teutonic culture of north-west Europe (the Jutland peninsula, Holstein, and the Rhine basin)¹⁰ which, by the beginning of the Christian era, was in constant and active intercourse with the Celts from Central Europe and with the Scandinavians in the north.¹¹ And, though the Church left little direct evidence of Anglo-Saxon heathen belief--in place-names, the days of the week, The Rune Poem, and the Nine Herbs Charm, for example--we have reason to believe that the Anglo-Saxons had a highly developed pantheon of gods and goddesses, comparable in devotional as well as ethical substance to that of the Scandinavians.¹² The tendency of a primitive people is to accept new gods with new practices, and to incorporate the gods into their religion as they absorb the new practices into their culture. The Germanic peoples assimilated the Norse myths in that way and carried them to Britain.

The range of Teutonic beliefs is vast, its development complex; the following explanation helps to clarify the matter:

If we take a geological metaphor then there are at least three main strata of myths: at bedrock there is Allfather the old Indo-European Sky Father; resting closely above him there are the cosmogonic beings Ymir, Norfi the father of Night (whose various marriages produced Space, Earth and Day), Mundilfari and his son and daughter the Moon and the Sun, Egir and his wife Ran (god and goddess of the sea), Hœnir, Mímir, and the three Norns; at the surface lies what is today commonly accepted

¹⁰ F. M. Stenton, Anglo-Saxon England, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), pp. 11-15.

¹¹ Peter Hunter Blair, An Introduction to Anglo-Saxon England (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1956), p. 56.

¹² Ursula Dronke, 'Beowulf and Ragnarok,' Saga-Book of the Viking Society for Northern Research, 17, No. 4 (1969), 304.

as the Northern Mythology, namely, Odin and the rest of the Æsir and Asynjur, and intermarrying with them the originally alien Vanir. 13

The first two strata are pre-Christian, the third comparatively late, not crystallising until late in the Viking era (Branston, p. 148).

Lit by gold—called 'water's flame' or 'the sea's fire'—the home of Ægir was a place of entertainment and plenty for the gods as well as for men drowned at sea. Yet it is not Ægir, despite Egill Skallagrimsson's verbal assault on him, but his wife, Ran, who represents the sea in its sterner aspect: to drown is 'to go to Ran' (MacCulloch, pp. 111, 119). In Celtic mythology, inexhaustible cauldrons of plenty are said to be in the Wonderland beneath the sea (MacCulloch, p. 90). Indeed, it is 'in the lore of the sea that connexions between Norse and Celtic tradition are most clearly perceived. This is not surprising when we remember how it was in their voyaging over the western ocean that the two people came into contact with one another' (Davidson, Gods and Myths of Northern Europe, p. 132).

The greatest of the Vanir was Njord, the father of Freyr and Freyja; he was also the god of seafaring and, since the sea was the main source of livelihood, of wealth as well (Davidson, p. 106). He was probably concerned with fertility because his name is the Norse equivalent of the Teutonic Earth Mother, Nerthus, described by Tacitus as being the goddess common to at least seven tribes along the Baltic coast, including the Anglii (Germania, Ch. 40). No satisfactory explanation exists of how the change of sex took place, but Njord's children became in turn the deities of fertility.

¹³ Brian Branston, Gods of the North (New York: Vanguard Press, 1956), p. 105.

It is worthy of note that the boar, Freyr's sacred animal, is the constant adornment of Anglo-Saxon helmets, since it was considered by the Anglo-Saxons to have protective powers, 'even though they may no longer have connected its magical efficacy with the ancient gods of peace and plenty.'¹⁴ In the Earth Goddess concept, then, the Teutonic religion, at least in its primitive state, was similar to the Celtic (MacCulloch, pp. 13-14).

Another possible link between Nerthus and Njord is that the wagon associated with the goddess might be the ship associated with the worship of the Vanir. Enough ship-graves have been unearthed in eastern England to reveal the importance of ship symbolism to the heathen Angles (Davidson, pp. 134-35). One very telling piece of evidence which strengthens the idea of the parallel (though not necessarily contemporary) development of the Anglo-Saxon and the Scandinavian beliefs is the Sutton Hoo ship-burial. A king's obsequies were performed on the coast of East Anglia in the seventh century, and yet the contents of his funeral ship are culturally comparable to Norwegian ship-burials that have been dated about 850.¹⁵ The definite Celtic belief in an afterlife is shown by the similar custom of providing the dead with grave-goods for use in the future-life, including such items as ornaments, weapons, animals, and even servants and family. All of these were cremated with the body on the funeral pyre. Or else, the deceased, sometimes lying on a wagon or in a chariot, was buried with his armour and personal accessories in a barrow, which became

¹⁴ Dorothy Whitelock, The Beginnings of English Society (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1952), p. 21.

¹⁵ P. H. Sawyer, The Age of the Vikings, 2nd ed. (London: Arnold, 1971), p. 76.

sacred, and given food for the afterlife feast. He might even be consulted for advice or for knowledge of the future (MacCulloch, p. 80).

Finally, the Norse deity, Gefion (Gefion, Gefn), usually linked with fertility and with the souls of unmarried women, is also a goddess of the sea (Branston, p. 152). In the Ynglinga Saga Snorri tells of her marriage to Skjold, i.e., the Scyld of Beowulf; of her connection with ploughing: does the Anglo-Saxon word geofon 'expanse of sea' refer perhaps to the 'vast plain of the sea ploughed by ships'? (Davidson, p. 114); and of her sanctuary at Leire which is very plausibly the site of Heorot.¹⁶

Such a pantheon as the Anglo-Saxons took to Britain was hardly totally expunged from English minds by a peaceful conversion to Christianity. We know it was not. For just as the vigorous Irish Church showed signs of its Celtic roots and heritage, so Anglo-Saxon Christianity in the south abided Teutonic traces in a largely syncretic fusion:

A violent conversion to the new religion was unnecessary when the old provided so many parallelisms that the tribal culture could absorb the conquering God without disrupting many of its basic preconceptions; only in time were these to give way before an ecclesiastical conquest. ¹⁷

Cultural influence and dependence, particularly Goidelic and Brittonic it seems, are always difficult to demonstrate, let alone prove: but we do have some evidence that Irish ecclesiastics tended to think of Ireland together with the whole of Anglo-Saxon

¹⁶ R. W. Chambers, 'Beowulf': An Introduction to the Study of the Poem with a Discussion of the Stories of Offa and Finn, 3rd ed. with a supplement by C. L. Wrenn (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1959), pp. 16-20.

¹⁷ William A. Chaney, 'Paganism to Christianity in Anglo-Saxon England,' Harvard Theological Review, 53, No. 3 (1960), 209.

Britain, Saxon and British, as having a culture uniform enough to allow at least a comity of Western Christendom.¹⁸

That the dangers of the sea were ever a dire and familiar reality to the pagan Anglo-Saxon is seen both in the lagu-stanza in The Rune Poem and in the first three Riddles of the Exeter Book. In these poems the sea is a force of Nature untamed by an ineffectual mankind; to men the sea remains unvanquished and victorious. Tacitus is sufficiently impressed by the massive power of the northern sea to say:

naturam Oceani atque aestus neque quaerere huius
operis est, ac multi rettulere: unum addiderim,
nusquam latius dominari mare, multum fluminum huc
atque illuc ferre, nec litore tenus ad Crescere aut
resorberi, sed influere penitus atque ambire, et
iugis etiam ac montibus inseri velut in suo. 19

The Christian Anglo-Saxon's concept of the anathematical sea is represented in The Whale, in which there is an obvious allegorical coalition of mythical and Biblical eschatology: at the bottom of the sea there waits a death-hall down to which the whale (i.e., Satan) takes seafarers (i.e., the souls of men):

ðonne semninga on sealtne weg

¹⁸ C. L. Wrenn, 'Saxons and Celts in South-West Britain,' Cymmrodorion (1959), rpt. in Word and Symbol: Studies in English Language by C. L. Wrenn, English Language Series, ed. Randolph Quirk (London: Longmans, 1967), p. 23.

¹⁹ To investigate the nature of Ocean and its tides lies outside my immediate scope, and the tale has often been told. I will add just one observation. Nowhere does the sea hold wider sway; it carries to and fro in its motion a mass of currents, and, in its ebb and flow, is not held by the coast, but passes deep inland and winds about, pushing in among highlands and mountains, as if in its own domain.

De Vita Agricola, Ch. 10.6, ed. R. M. Ogilvie and Ian Richmond (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), p. 99; trans. H. Mattingly, Tacitus: On Britain and Germany (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1948), pp. 60-61.

mid þa noþe niþer gewiteþ
 garsecgas gæst, grund geseceð,
 on þonne in deaðsele drence bifæsted
 scipu mid scealcum. (ASPR, III, 27a-31a)

The attitude that centres cosmological horror and terror in the sea pervades the Old Testament. In the Creation, the Spirit moves over the waters, controlling and forming them; subterranean waters invest the land with latent menace (Genesis 7.11); while God's final act of judgement is contained in the prophetic vision of the defeat of Leviathan, 'cetum qui in mari est' (Isaiah 27.1).

All the more miraculous, therefore, must have seemed a man's power over the sea, for 'Non sola autem aeris sed et maris animalia, immo et ipsum mare. . . . ipsum inquam mare promptum famulo Christi ubi opus habuit, impendebat officium.'²⁰ It is feasible to see in this an overlap with Celtic belief, especially in the light of the following account of St Cuthbert's nocturnal devotions which nearly frightened his secret observer to death:

Ingressusque altitudinem maris, donec ad collum usque et brachia unda tumens assurgeret, pervigiles undisonis in laudibus tenebras noctis exegit. Appropinquante autem diluculo, ascendens in terram denuo coepit in litore flexis genibus orare. Quod dum ageret, venere continuo duo de profundo maris quadrupedia quae vulgo lutraeae vocantur. Haec ante illum strata in arena, anhelitu suo pedes eius fovere coeperunt, ac villo satagebant extergere. Completoque ministerio, percepta ab eo benedictione patrias sunt relapsa sub undas. Ipse quoque mox domum reversus, canonicos cum fratribus ymnos hora competente complevit. 21

On the other hand, man's unregenerate state of imperfection is

²⁰ 'Moreover not only the creatures of the air but also of the sea, yes, and even the sea itself . . . the very sea, I say, was ready to do service to the servant of Christ when he needed it.' Bede, *Vita Sancti Cuthberti*, Ch. 21, ed. and trans. Bertram Colgrave, *Two 'Lives' of Saint Cuthbert: A Life by an Anonymous Monk of Lindisfarne and Bede's 'Prose Life'* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1940), pp. 224-27.

²¹ going into the deep water until the swelling waves

also associated with the sea: the Fall leads from the Garden, which is watered by a river,²² through exile to the Flood, 'the ultimate abandonment of man to the forces of spiritual and physical disintegration.' Quite apart from the Flood, the sea, suffering, and death occur together often in the Old Testament (e.g., in the Psalms); so that any victory over the sea, such as the crossing of the Red Sea, thus assumes implications of extraordinary importance, and becomes a major event in Judaic-Christian tradition.

The New Testament sea is no less malignant though Christ, like Jehovah, has power over it: he calms storms at sea, walks on the waves, and makes fish swim into nets. Then there is the imagery of

rose as far as his neck and arms, he spent the dark hours of the night watching and singing praises to the sound of the waves. When daybreak was at hand, he went up on to the land and began to pray once more, kneeling on the shore. While he was doing this, there came forth from the depths of the sea two four-footed creatures which are commonly called otters. These, prostrate before him on the sand, began to warm his feet with their breath and sought to dry him with their fur, and when they had finished their ministrations they received his blessing and slipped away into their native waters. He forthwith returned home and sang the canonical hymns with the brethren at the appointed hour.

Ibid., Ch. 10, pp. 188-91.

²² As in, for example, Augustine's striking fourth-century image:

Sed vae tibi, flumen moris humani! quis resistet tibi? quamdiu non siccaberis? quousque volves Evae filios in mare magnum et formidulosum, quod vix transeunt qui lignum conscenderint?

(But damn you, you torrent of human ways! Who can dam you up? Will you never dry up? How much longer will you wash away the sons of Eve down into that vast and terrible sea which even they aboard the Bark can scarcely cross?)

Confessiones, Bk 1.16.25, ed. Martin Skutella, *Bibliotheca Scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana*, rev. ed. Heiko Jürgens and Wiebke Schaub (1934; Stuttgart: B. G. Teubner, 1969), p. 19, ll. 7-10; translation mine.

salvation which sees Christ's Body as a ship, itself symbolically incorporated in actual church architecture. All these must have deep roots in man's primaevial fears and hopes. Moreover, included in Christian cosmology, the sea takes on individual as well as cosmic significance, for it offers 'an extended complex of spiritual metaphor,' applicable to a man's earthly life: a mirror of moral deficiency; a trap for the soul; a figure for hell; the highway to eternity.²³

Articulated, expanded, and emphasised in the homiletic writings and Biblical commentaries of patristic literature, these attitudes and fears become the dominant 'meanings' of the sea in Anglo-Saxon literature. Margaret E. Goldsmith believes, quite rightly, that 'the fundamental tenets of doctrine, the most often-quoted texts and the most familiar symbolism of those staple works [i.e., the Bible and writings of the Church Fathers] would ring in the head of any thinking Christian man.'²⁴ In particular, the availability of a vast store of sea commonplaces and connotations, Celtic and Teutonic, pagan and Christian, sacred and secular, would, I maintain, make marine imagery ready and rich material for any poet to work. It is in their treatment of the sea, with its vigorous figurative significance, that the Anglo-Saxon poets are to be seen accomplishing their greatest things.

²³ Jacqueline Covo, 'The Lake of Darkness: Marine Imagery in Relation to Themes of Disruption in Medieval Poetry,' Diss. Brandeis 1967, pp. 28-29. I gratefully acknowledge that I was alerted to this thesis by Brian S. Lee, first in his article, '"Self-expression is Exacting,"' ELTS Occasional Papers (Univ. of Cape Town), No. 2 (Feb. 1971), p. 8, and subsequently in conversation.

²⁴ The Mode and Meaning of 'Beowulf' (London: Athlone Press, 1970), p. 20.

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In his classic article, 'Diction and Imagery in Anglo-Saxon Poetry,' Essays and Studies, 11 (1925), Henry Cecil Wyld suggests that the Anglo-Saxon poets' treatment of the sea and ships is worthy of at least a whole article (p. 63). Four years later we find his words realised in an article devoted entirely to such a study, if only to the sea, that by Helen Buckhurst, 'Terms and Phrases for the Sea in Old English Poetry,'²⁵ As the title states, hers is a study of poetic diction. It is detailed and well-informed, though apparently a little unsound (Brady, op. cit., p. 23). It is also limited. Buckhurst herself admits that to do justice to the subject one 'outline study' is not enough (p. 103); and regrets having to leave unexplored 'the question of the poetic art' of Anglo-Saxon poetry (p. 118). The essential importance of such a study is further attested to in George K. Anderson's list of half a dozen works that

²⁵ Helen Thérèse McMillan Buckhurst, 'Terms and Phrases for the Sea in Old English Poetry,' in Studies in English Philology: A Miscellany in Honor of Frederick Klaeber, ed. Kemp Malone and Martin B. Ruud (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1929), pp. 103-19. Other relatively substantial studies dealing specifically with the sea in Anglo-Saxon poetry are: Hans Merbach, 'Das Meer in der Dichtung der Angelsachsen,' Diss. Breslau 1884; Stopford A. Brooke, The History of Early English Literature . . . (London: Macmillan, 1892), I, 223-57; Jules Douady, La Mer et les poètes anglais (Paris: Hachette, 1912); Robert Ashton Kissack, Jr, 'The Sea in Anglo-Saxon and Middle English Poetry,' Washington University Studies, Humanistic Series, 13, No. 2 (1926), 371-89; Anne Treneer, The Sea in English Literature from Beowulf to Donne (Liverpool: Liverpool Univ. Press, 1926), pp. 1-44; Ronald Graham, 'The Sea in English Poetry from Beowulf to The Lyrical Ballads,' Diss. Univ. College (Port Elizabeth) 1929, pp. 8-19; Lena B. Morton, 'The Influence of the Sea upon English Poetry from the Anglo-Saxon Period to the Victorian Period,' Diss. Case Western Reserve 1946, pp. 20-50; and Caroline Brady, 'The Synonyms for "Sea" in Beowulf,' in Studies in Honor of Albert Morey Sturtevant (Lawrence: Univ. of Kansas Press, 1952), pp. 22-46. According to Fred C. Robinson, 'Old English Research in Progress: 1971-1972,' NM, 73, No. 3 (1972), Victor L. Strite is preparing 'A Glossary of OE Sea-Terms and an Interdisciplinary Study of the Sea's Role in Anglo-Saxon England and Literature' (p. 701).

'might well be read in reference to all Old English literature, poetry as well as prose,' in which he includes, in company with Wyld's article, Kissack's and Treneer's essays as well as Emile Pons's Le Thème et le sentiment de la nature dans la poésie anglo-saxonne (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1925).²⁶

Of the previous studies of the sea in Anglo-Saxon poetry--some from a subjective point of view rather than a cultural, the poetry being intuitively appreciated as an expression of timeless, universal feeling rather than of historical, social attitudes and beliefs; and others from a linguistic as opposed to a literary approach, the metaphoric character of the marine diction being investigated out of its verbal context rather than within a poem's total structure--some results have been generalisations too broad to be valid or convincing, aesthetic judgements from the modern mind instead of from the contemporary Anglo-Saxon mind, and even actual error.

Discussing flora, times of the year, times of the day, climate, terrestrial features, celestial bodies, and the sea, Elizabeth Deering Hanscom presents in lucid detail the intellectual and emotional response of the Anglo-Saxon mind to the external universe, and concludes:

Of certain large, and to us significant aspects of nature, the English poets either took no cognizance or regarded them with indifference. But to other forms they paid the homage of the undivided mind, seeing sharply, differentiating keenly, expressing forcibly. The passages which best illustrate these qualities are those relating to the sea. 27

²⁶ The Literature of the Anglo-Saxons, rev. ed. (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1966), p. 205.

²⁷ 'The Feeling for Nature in Old English Poetry,' JEGP, 5, No. 4 (1905), 462-63.

Her study offers many examples of the way a thing's nature is verbally explored and defined in Anglo-Saxon poetry. The Anglo-Saxon poets depicted the sea, especially, with arachnidous thoroughness for 'they saw the mighty waters in myriad forms and had a name and phrase for each' (ibid., p. 444). She stumbles into contradiction, however, when she says that, through recurrence and convention, many a happy epithet or an appropriate phrase has lost its emotional value, though there is at the same time an abundance of implicit metaphor. A misunderstanding of the nature of poetic metaphor is here exposed, a matter which I shall discuss later in some detail.

Examples of subjective generalisations appear in the contradictory assertions, on the one hand, that Anglo-Saxon poetry 'like that of all early people, was strongly objective. Nature was presented in a series of objects or sensible manifestations' (Hanscom, p. 461) and, on the other hand, that 'the interpretation of Nature is not wholly objective in character. [There is an] intimate relationship which the primitive Teuton recognised as existing between Nature and man.'²⁸ Then again, while Kissack notices in the kennings ganotes beoð, hronrad, and swanrad 'imaginative power' and 'a decidedly strong feeling expressed' (op. cit., p. 373), Wyld finds the same expressions 'no more vital' than those of eighteenth century poetry that 'express no emotion . . . reveal no justness of observation or insight. . . . do not strike the imagination . . . contain, indeed, nothing of the essence of true poetry' (op. cit., p. 58). Finally, if Moorman

²⁸ Frederic W. Moorman, 'The Interpretation of Nature in English Poetry from Beowulf to Shakespeare,' Quellen und Forschungen zur Sprach- und Culturgeschichte der Germanischen Völker, No. 95 (Strassburg: Trübner, 1905), p. 8.

speaks of 'inartistic repetitions' and 'over-charged epithets' (op. cit., p. 21), Treneer says that 'There is grandeur in the repetition of essential epithets' (op. cit., p. 36). Clearly, there is need here for some clarification.

Moorman's study has its critical foundation in a Wordsworthian view of man and Nature. He is sensitively aware of the vitality and perception of Anglo-Saxon imagery, and acknowledges its appropriateness, particularly with regard to the sea as dramatic background in Beowulf, for example (pp. 9-10). But, while there is in his essay plenty of narrative illumination, there is no broadly contextual correlation of action, theme, and structure: there is no mention of the imagery's kinetic function or of the sea's metaphoric role; the sea's thematic implications and structural importance are overlooked and its prominence no more than superficially noticed; that in Beowulf 'it is never described as green or blue' is apparently more significant to Moorman (p. 14). Indeed, he considers the Anglo-Saxon poet's interpretation of the sea remarkable merely for the framework it provides for a poem's depiction of landscape.

Moorman's main idea is that the poetry of the Anglo-Saxons is the embodiment of their awe and wonder at the wild grandeur and sublime pageantry of Nature, and is to be praised for its sensuous apprehension and concrete description of the external universe. But it is, one feels, a deformed aesthetics that derives pleasure spasmodically from a single striking feature of a poem and not cumulatively from the organic harmony of the whole. Nor does this criticism destroy my own thesis, for to focus on a poem's metaphors is not to isolate the aesthetic experience of the poem: on the contrary, the experience is justified by the metaphors and deepened by the fuller awareness of the poem's internal harmonies.

The analysis of a poem's metaphors involves the interpretation of the poem as a whole.

Actual error may be based upon lack of information which is available in fields other than literary--such as historical, sociological, or archaeological--as, when in an attempt at a somewhat simplistic polarisation of Christianity and paganism, Kissack starts from the generalised assumption that 'the sea, especially in its sterner aspects, is essentially a non-Christian thing' and arrives at the false conclusion that on their pagan spirit 'the Christianizing of the Anglo-Saxons had, in fact, a chastening and a subduing effect' (p. 375).²⁹ This is a subjective judgement without supporting evidence, the validity of which is therefore questionable from an Anglo-Saxon point of view. As The Dream of the Rood so magnificently affirms, there was no friction between the Christian and pagan traditions of loyalty to one's lord, nor at any time did the ethics of the blood-feud clash with those of Christianity.³⁰ Other, more tangible evidence of this is the Franks Casket and the pair of Sutton Hoo spoons.³¹ Moreover, if

²⁹ Similarly, Moorman implies that the Anglo-Saxon poet must have felt Christianity to be a kind of cultural inhibition (pp. 21-22).

³⁰ See, for example, Bernard F. Huppé, The Web of Words (Albany: State Univ. of New York Press, 1970), p. 94, and Dorothy Whitelock, The Audience of 'Beowulf' (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1951), p. 14.

³¹ H. R. Ellis Davidson, 'Gods and Heroes in Stone,' in The Early Cultures of North-West Europe (H. M. Chadwick Memorial Studies), ed. Cyril Fox and Bruce Dickins (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1950), p. 124, and R. L. S. Bruce-Mitford, The Sutton Hoo Ship-Burial: A Handbook (London: British Museum, 1968), p. 59. See, too, R. E. Kaske, 'The Silver Spoons of Sutton Hoo,' Speculum, 42, No. 4 (1967), 670-72, who argues that both spoons should have the Christian engraving 'PAULOS,' which doubly emphasises the kind of religious syncretism postulated by Chaney: 'That the culture of the tribes and the old religion which helped form it in their turn shaped Christianity, which was assimilated to them, is in its principle surprising to no historian of the Conversion period' ('Paganism to Christianity in Anglo-Saxon England,' pp. 199-200).

the native Germanic poetic tradition allowed a perfect fusion of Christian and heroic attitudes and values, then Anglo-Saxon poetic interpretation of the sea was Christian both in design and in concept.³² In short, it was through 'heroic' eyes that the Anglo-Saxon audience beheld a pagan world in a Christian universe.³³

Kissack vindicates, however, Klaeber's assessment of his brief survey (Klaeber calls it 'a suggestive little sketch'³⁴) when he asserts that in Anglo-Saxon poetry naturalistic metaphors are used to describe the moral and spiritual worlds (p. 372); and that the Anglo-Saxon poet was less interested in realism than in 'an impressionism based upon substantial fact, colored with a mythopoeic temperament, and expressed in a lavishly imaginative manner' (p. 380) --all of which makes far more feasible an Anglo-Saxon acceptance and assimilation both of the patristic views of the sea, for example, as something awesome to the point of terrible, and of the superhuman fiction of Beowulf.

In her 'pleasing general survey' (Klaeber, loc. cit.), Anne Treneer attempts to revalue Anglo-Saxon poetic diction, much as Wyld did the previous year. While granting the existence of formulaic synonyms, she gainsays any verbal attrition. The gamut of opinion she gives is crucial in this respect:

³² These are the respective opinions of Michael D. Cherniss, 'Heroic Ideals and the Moral Climate of Genesis B,' MLQ, 30, No. 4 (1969), 497, and I. L. Gordon, 'Traditional Themes in The Wanderer and The Seafarer,' RES, 5, No. 17 (1954), 13.

³³ Clinton Albertson, 'Anglo-Saxon Literature and Western Culture,' Thought, 33 (1958), 112.

³⁴ Fr[ederick] Klaeber, ed., Beowulf and The Fight at Finnsburg, 3rd ed. (Boston: Heath, 1950), p. clxxi.

The earlier tendency to somewhat uncritical praise of Old English compounds and metaphors has led in our own day to a recoil towards undue depreciation. It was necessary to insist that the Old English poems were not early experiments of writers in an untutored language, but the work of poets schooled in traditional forms and phrases; that a lack of freshness is sometimes felt; that the technical demands of alliteration caused synonyms to be multiplied; that the picture-words became part of the general stock and carried with them the danger inherent in any poetic diction--the danger that a composition shall merely rattle with dead words.

(p. 37) 35

Thus W. P. Ker, while he is aware of the wealth of metaphor, nevertheless considers the diction of Anglo-Saxon poetry to be extravagant and tedious, and to consist largely of conventional synonyms; and so he looks for artistic compensation in narrative technique.³⁶ But, for Trencher, the revivification of such expressions would be possible only if 'each one [were] judged separately in the alliterative phrase in which it occurs, where the magic of combination may make of it something entirely new and unexpected' (pp. 37-38). I emphasise this point because it

³⁵ Ronald Graham, for example, whose thesis, 'The Sea in English Poetry from Beowulf to The Lyrical Ballads,' Univ. College (Port Elizabeth) 1929, unfortunately displays ubiquitous linguistic inaccuracy and literary impressionism, is particularly prone to laudatory effervescence and rhapsodic gush, as the following evaluation of the Anglo-Saxon Riddles illustrates:

The action that stirs the blood to exultation; a beauty of phrase and metaphor that is as keen as pain; a strength that overwhelms the mind and lames the imagination - these qualities ring through the old riddles with a sound that lifts many of them into the highest realms of poetry. In the Third Riddle, a poem never praised too much, the inspiration is so puissant as to make us one with the storm - lift us out of our individual selves into a cosmic consciousness - surely the highest function of poetry ! (p. 17)

³⁶ The Dark Ages (1904; rpt. New York: New American Library, 1958), pp. 152-54.

is on this issue that Caroline Brady builds her argument, though she expresses little hope in reviving 'dead' metaphors.

In her excellent paper, Brady first asks a number of questions (semantic as well as literary) concerning the vocabulary the Anglo-Saxon poets had at their disposal, and then sets out to determine how far the sea terms in Beowulf are synonymous, figurative, and literal. She justly criticises previous studies of the subject on the grounds that they have analysed words and locutions in a vacuum and have thus produced inadequate or imprecise meanings (pp. 22-23). I use her first conclusion to answer Ker's point about stereotyped synonyms and hollow periphrasis. Quoting Klaeber (pp. lix-lx), Brady writes:

We may conclude that it is altogether true that 'the large part which the sea played in the life of the Beowulfian peoples, finds expression in an astonishing wealth of terms applied to it,' but that this wealth consisted not in sheer number of words and locutions all with the same meaning, but rather in the variety of terms and their appropriateness to the varied aspects and characteristics of the sea itself. (p. 36)

To sum up this discussion so far: I have tried to point out the dangers inherent in a literary approach, namely, a purely subjective criticism, a neglect of the cultural context and, finally, linguistic irrelevance. I now quote Brady's second conclusion to introduce my main consideration in this thesis, viz., the sea as a metaphor in Anglo-Saxon poetry:

In conclusion, we must say that the metaphorical content in the sea-vocabulary of Beowulf is negligible. . . . In depicting the sea this poet is no artificer mechanically piling up synonyms and conventional metaphors, but an artist who knows how to use a variety of words and phrases in their literal senses to convey the effect he desires. (p. 44; emphasis mine)

Briefly stated, the limitations of Brady's paper are these: she discusses only Beowulf; and even then she excludes the Mere

section; she restricts the semantic reference of the sea by excluding 'compounds and phrases in which words from the sea-vocabulary are used as elements of composition but which actually refer to voyage, ship, seafarer, shore, cliffs, etc.' (p. 44, n. 1). But the most serious limitation is that her definition of metaphor is vague and uncertain (p. 37); the most radical type, a simple statement of identity, it is inadequate, for it omits the aspects of analogy, interaction, and iconicity; and then, omitting the aspect of context, she does not relate a poem's metaphors to its total meaning: 'With inadequate knowledge of the meanings of their component parts,' she says, 'we are likely to find metaphors where none exist' (loc. cit.). But by the same token we are likely to discount some perfectly valid, but subtle, ones. Brady's argument is aprioristic in that, basing her definition of metaphor on the substitution theory (Gustaf Stern's, presumably), which, according to Max Black, accommodates only the trivial, hackneyed, and near-literal metaphor,³⁷ she rejects some possible metaphors because they are too literal: e.g., bront ford, flodyba, wægholm, garsecg, hronrad, segirad, swanrad, and ganotes bæð (pp. 38-43).

The problem is simplified if we make our objective more realistic: merely the most probable and justifiable interpretation--nothing more, but nothing less either. Granted, we have an inadequate knowledge of the meanings of certain words but, one feels, paragraphic context will yield more significant meaning than can a single phrase. Nowhere, for example, does Brady deduce a word's meaning from a

³⁷ 'Metaphor,' in Models and Metaphors: Studies in Language and Philosophy (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1962), pp. 31-36, 45.

stretch of language greater than hemistichal collocation.³⁸ I agree: Beowulf is the work of a conscious artist. But Brady overlooks the fact that the apparent literalness of the marine and maritime expressions is subject to an overriding figurative principle of composition. However, the reasons why I do not find Brady's study quite satisfactory may be more productively considered indirectly, as three general topics, than directly, as specific points of disagreement. I shall discuss these topics separately, but first let us see all of them clearly.

The first concerns the 'complex verbal organisation' of a poem.³⁹ Ideally, every possible and probable implication of a word that contributes to the unity of the poem's achievement should be considered since, in a piece of good poetry, the precise meaning of the words is preserved; their connotations are controlled by their whole context; and their integrity and interrelation are inviolable; so that, carefully traced, the designed meaning of the poem should lead to an overwhelming and effective aesthetic conclusion. The second is that Anglo-Saxon sea-poetry should be seen as an expression of its cultural environment. The third concerns the nature of poetic metaphor; its structure and meaning. Of course, the basic artistic criterion still holds good, that the more one tries to isolate an element in a work of art the less structural the element becomes. But in a poem thematically structured, in which the poet's intention is embodied in the metaphors he uses,

³⁸ Cf. Francis B[arton] Gummere, The Anglo-Saxon Metaphor, Diss. Freiburg 1881 (Halle: E. Karras, 1881): 'The typical A. S. metaphor was originally confined to one word, or at the furthest, to several words that stood in the closest syntactical relation' (p. 53).

³⁹ F. R. Leavis, Education and the University: A Sketch for an 'English School' (London: Chatto & Windus, 1943), p. 82.

the metaphors illuminate and help to unify the theme. Thus, my argument is that metaphoric pattern should be recognised as an organising principle in Anglo-Saxon poetry; moreover, that Anglo-Saxon poetic metaphor can be regarded within both the context of the whole poem and the wider cultural context which includes the poem. For, as Leavis puts it:

it will not do to treat metaphors, images and other local effects as if their relation to the poem were at all like that of plums to cake, or stones attesting that the jam is genuine. They are worth examining--they are there to examine--because they are foci of a complex life, and sometimes the context from which they cannot be even provisionally separated, if the examination is to be worth anything, is a wide one.
(pp. 82-83)

* * *

First, verbal complexity. This should not be disallowed on the grounds that Anglo-Saxon literature 'is the naive utterance of a people not too long emerged from a tribal state, with a relatively narrow intellectual outlook' (Anderson, p. 43). To deny the sophistication and complexity of most Anglo-Saxon poetry is to jeopardise seriously the aesthetic standards of the whole of Western literary tradition. One has only to set the creative genius that flourished in Bede's Northumbria,⁴⁰ and the astonishment of the Norman invaders when they saw the artistic treasures of England, alongside the dynamic dignity of The Dream of the Rood, not only perpetuated in stone in Scotland but also preserved in codex in Italy, together with the courtliness of Beowulf (e.g., ll. 359b and 613b), especially in the light of the finds at Sutton Hoo,⁴¹ 'a poem

⁴⁰ R. W. Chambers, 'Bede,' Proceedings of the British Academy, 22 (1936), 129-56.

⁴¹ 'The imagination of the author of Beowulf moved upon the threshold of Christian chivalry, if indeed it had not already passed within,' J. R. R. Tolkien, 'Prefatory Remarks,' in Beowulf and The Finnesburg Fragment, trans. John R. Clark Hall, rev. ed. C. L. Wrenn (London: Allen & Unwin, 1950), p. xxii.

as difficult and as highly wrought in its way as are Paradise lost, the Divine comedy, or a tragedy of Sophocles in their different ways,⁴² in order to see the height and the range of Anglo-Saxon civilisation as well as the maturity of its poetry. Though I do not wish to go so far here as to demand any absolute formal correlation between the physical artefacts and the poetry of Anglo-Saxon culture, I nevertheless suggest that the mind that produced the one--the serpentine forms linked in continuous series--has a close artistic affinity with the mind that composed the other--words interlocked in energetic patterns.⁴³

On the other hand, we must not forget the possible objection that the language itself is an obstacle to an intimate response, and this is true. But we should be able to shorten the critical distance, if not by intelligence and intuition alone, at least by affirmative assumptions of high poetic quality and by an appropriately tentative approach, to arrive at close readings comparable in their concreteness and validity to those of more modern poems. We are further helped by the fact that the older the poetry is to which we are attending, the more relevant becomes the poetic tradition and its cultural context. Indeed, for historical reasons Anglo-Saxon poetry demands this kind of treatment if we are to appreciate it truly.

⁴² Paull F. Baum, 'The Meter of the Beowulf,' MP, 46, No. 3 (1949), 162. Similarly, Whitelock, The Audience of 'Beowulf,' p. 105.

⁴³ See, for example, John Leyerle, 'The Interlace Structure of Beowulf,' University of Toronto Quarterly, 37 (1967), 1-17. Cf. Charles Muscatine, Chaucer and the French Tradition: A Study in Style and Meaning (Berkeley and Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press, 1957), pp. 167-68, who points to the aesthetic correlation between mediaeval literary form and Gothic art, especially in the Canterbury Tales. Muscatine's lead is followed by Robert M. Jordan who, in his Chaucer and the Shape of Creation: The Aesthetic Possibilities of Inorganic Structure (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1967), goes even further and considers Gothic architecture as a basis for poetic structure.

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In his explanation of Spenser's method of poetic composition, Bishop Hurd, in his Letters on Chivalry and Romance, draws by way of illustration this comparison between Greek and Gothic architecture: 'The question is not, which of the two is conducted in the simplest or truest taste: but, whether there be not sense and design in both, when scrutinized by the laws on which each is projected.'⁴⁴ Valuable for the purposes of this thesis is the point made here that the important objectives and criteria of a poet's own culture ought not to be ignored by anyone seeking to appreciate the proper quality of the poet's work.

Whatever his perspective, when a literary critic studies the poetry of a nation, he is obliged to take into account the milieu in which the poets worked. He usually finds certain common, fundamental similarities in form and content that are the direct result of connected cultural and historical influences, which determined what the poets would say and how they said it. Greek and Roman dramatists, for example, had to work within the fixed limits of the four unities of time, place, action, and genre. The Neo-classicist writers of Elizabethan comedy restricted themselves in the same way. The poetry of the years between the two great wars of this century represents both the rejection of the Romanticism of the previous century and the attempt to reconstruct the values of Western civilization in the language of a new rationalism and realism. Concerned as he is with the nature and function of literature, the critic must be aware of such conventions if he is to assess competently and justly. He must see literature expressing the values of a society.

In the criticism of Anglo-Saxon poetry the formal conventions

⁴⁴ David Daiches, Critical Approaches to Literature (London: Longmans, 1956), p. 262.

of an oral tradition--formula and theme--have received the most energetic attention. Issues of authorship and artistry have also been re-examined in the light of the oral-formulaic theory. Until the systematic refutation by Ann Chalmers Watts of Magoun's thesis, which he expounded in his two seminal papers concerning the basis of Anglo-Saxon poetry,⁴⁵ the controversial aspects of the theory were the definition of the Anglo-Saxon formula⁴⁶ and the validity of a formulaic convention similar to the Homeric.⁴⁷

It is, however, the artistic implications of the theory that most concern our present discussion. For if one assumes that all Anglo-Saxon poetry is formulaic and drawn from a common stock, then, according to Magoun's thesis, it must also be orally composed, and if orally composed, then beyond the reach of modern methods of literary criticism. Magoun sees Beowulf as the composition of an oral anthologist, a magpie minstrel.⁴⁸ A talented disciple of Magoun's,

⁴⁵ The Lyre and the Harp: A Comparative Reconsideration of Oral Tradition in Homer and Old English Epic Poetry (New Haven and London: Yale Univ. Press, 1969). Francis P. Magoun, Jr., 'The Oral-Formulaic Character of Anglo-Saxon Narrative Poetry,' Speculum, 28, No. 3 (1953), 446-67; and 'Bede's Story of Caedman: The Case History of an Anglo-Saxon Oral Singer,' Speculum, 30, No. 1 (1955), 49-63.

⁴⁶ See, for example, Donald K. Fry's survey of ad hoc definitions in 'Old English Formulas and Systems,' ES, 48, No. 3 (1967), 193-204.

⁴⁷ William Whallon, for instance, in his 'The Diction of Beowulf,' PMLA, 76, No. 4 (1961), finds little that is formulaic in the poem (p. 319). Again, in 'The Oral-Formulaic Analyses of Old English Verse,' Speculum, 37, No. 3 (1962), Robert D. Stevick points out (quite rightly) that there is no evidence to prove that Caedmon's Hymn is either made up of existing formulas or based on Christian models (pp. 384-85). He reminds us too that, since Parry restricted his thesis to epic narrative, it can serve as only an analogue to Anglo-Saxon poetry, little of which is epic (p. 387).

⁴⁸ 'Béowulf A,' a Folk-Variant,' Arv: Tidskrift för Nordisk Folkminnes forskning, 14 (1958), 95-101; and 'Béowulf B: a Folk-Poem on Béowulf's Death,' in Early English and Norse Studies: Presented to Hugh Smith on His Sixtieth Birthday, ed. Arthur Brown and Peter Foote (London: Methuen, 1963), pp. 127-40.

Robert P. Creed, who has not only analysed the whole of Beowulf for formulas but also composed four 'lines' of Anglo-Saxon poetry, using what he claims is the technique of the Anglo-Saxon poet, argues for a special critical approach, one which would enable us to simulate the response of the Anglo-Saxon audience, that of comparing formulas both within a single poem as well as within the poetic tradition as a whole.⁴⁹ But postulating as it does the immediate, comparative, and total recall of the audience, Creed's idea seems to me to be too artificial to be tenable. In any event, our response could be only deficient, since our corpus of Anglo-Saxon poetry is fragmentary.

But if support for Magoun has been strong and resourceful, the opposition has been equally unequivocal. While some scholars have modified them, others have rejected outright the implications of what remains an hypothesis. In his classic study, The Art of Beowulf, A. G. Brodeur contends that the highly developed verbal sensitivity of the poet gainsays any preclusion on formulaic grounds of its composition by a lettered poet.⁵⁰ Larry D. Benson's conclusion is categorically in favour of a literate poetry: 'That the Old English oral singers used a heavily formulaic style is only an attractive theory--probably true but necessarily unproven; that lettered poets, such as the author of the Boethian Meters, did use such a style is a demonstrable fact.'⁵¹ Benson's meaning is clear: whatever else we

⁴⁹ 'Studies in the Technique of Composition of the Beowulf Poetry in British Museum MS. Cotton Vitellius A XV,' Diss. Harvard 1955; 'The Making of an Anglo-Saxon Poem,' ELH, 26, No. 4 (1959), 445-54; and 'On the Possibility of Criticizing Old English Poetry,' Texas Studies in Literature and Language, 3, No. 1 (1961), 97-106.

⁵⁰ Arthur Gilchrist Brodeur, The Art of Beowulf (Berkeley and Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press, 1959), pp. 3-6.

⁵¹ 'The Literary Character of Anglo-Saxon Formulaic Poetry,' PMLA, 81, No. 5 (1966), 340. A decade earlier, Claes Schaar, 'On

may do to the texts we have, we cannot alter the fact that they exist for us in written form. And it is largely through intelligent and appreciative scrutiny by critics like Brodeur, Greenfield, Huppé, and Irving that we have come to realise that 'we need not reject "the ordinary canons of literary judgment."⁵² British scholars agree. Indeed, why should the ability to read and write necessarily inhibit the techniques of oral composition? It seems more likely that the literate Anglo-Saxon poets working in a culture accustomed to oral performance would continue to make use of oral methods of composition, 'content to use what was serviceable in the technique of their unlettered fellows.'⁵³ Consequently, Anglo-Saxon poets could make consciously artistic dictional choices (which might or might not be formulas) and so inform a context with new overtones. The existence of 'formulaic utterances and habitual collocations' must have strongly encouraged the poets 'to stretch linguistic expression beyond the ordinary potentialities of prose, and to achieve

a New Theory of Old English Poetic Diction,' *Neophil*, 40, No. 4 (1956), cautioned critics: 'the proposition "all formulaic poetry is oral" does not follow, either logically or psychologically, from the proposition "all oral poetry is formulaic"' (p. 303). Jackson J. Campbell concurs: 'we cannot assume, simply because there are an appreciable number of formulas in a poem, that the poem was composed orally. We have too many formulaic poems where the poet obviously translated a Latin original very closely, so closely in some cases that he must have been at a desk with the original before him' ('Learned Rhetoric in Old English Poetry,' *MP*, 63, No. 3, 1966, 191).

⁵² Stanley B. Greenfield, 'The Canons of Old English Criticism,' *ELH*, 34, No. 2 (1967), 155. Cf. the prudent disenchantment of J. C. van Meurs, 'Beowulf and Literary Criticism,' *Neophil*, 39, No. 2 (1955), 114-30, and D. A. H. Evans, 'The Lake of Monsters in *Beowulf*,' *Studia Neophilologica*, 40, No. 1 (1968), 148-54.

⁵³ Goldsmith, *The Mode and Meaning of 'Beowulf'*, p. 10. So, too, A. C. Spearing, *Criticism and Medieval Poetry*, 2nd ed. (London: Arnold, 1972), p. 23.

a disturbing and richly suggestive poetry.⁵⁴ In this way, poets creatively participated in the poetic tradition. Above all, because it had a definite social function, traditional Anglo-Saxon poetry was, after centuries of development,⁵⁵ approaching its perfection and, as I believe, reached it in the literary mode.⁵⁶

But there is another possible reason for the literary perpetuation of oral poetic techniques. In A.D. 597 Christianity was brought to England by a group of monks sent from Rome. Within less than ten years, three bishoprics had been established,⁵⁷ and it appeared that the conversion of the English was to be an easy success. To be effectual, the evangelistic attempts of the first missionaries to England required an attractive presentation and the popular dissemination of Scripture. However, they faced direct competition from a strong native poetic tradition that was likewise dependent upon oral delivery for its publication. We know from Alcuin's famous rebuke in his letter (A.D. 797) to the Bishop of Lindisfarne ('Quid Hiniieldus cum Christo?') just how familiar the pagan poetry was: the Anglo-Saxon clergy themselves knew it well enough to sing the traditional Germanic lays (carmina⁵⁸). Needed was the adaptation

⁵⁴ Randolph Quirk, 'Poetic Language and Old English Metre,' in Early English and Norse Studies . . ., p. 171.

⁵⁵ Peter Hunter Blair, Roman Britain and Early England, 55 B.C. -A.D. 871 (1963; rpt. London: Sphere, 1969), p. 30.

⁵⁶ The major premise of this statement comes from T. S. Eliot's 1943 British-Norwegian Institute lecture, 'The Social Function of Poetry,' in On Poetry and Poets (1945; rpt. London: Faber, 1957), p. 16. Cf. Whallon, p. 319.

⁵⁷ Peter Hunter Blair, An Introduction to Anglo-Saxon England, p. 117.

⁵⁸ As Bede, in his metrical treatise, calls vernacular poems. See W. F. Bolton, A History of Anglo-Latin Literature, 597-1066, I (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1967), 160.

of the techniques of the vernacular poetry to an overriding Christian purpose. Bede tells us how this was done in Northumbria in A.D. 680:

In huius monasterio abbatissae fuit frater quidam divina gratia specialiter insignis, quia carmina religioni et pietati apta facere solebat, ita ut, quicquid ex divinis litteris per interpretes disceret, hoc ipse post pusillum verbis poeticis maxima suavitate et conpunctione compositis in sua, id est Anglorum, lingua proferret. 59

According to the Anglo-Saxon version of this story, Caedmon's 'song and his leod wæron swa wynsumu to gehyranne þætte seolfan þa his lareowas æt his muðe wrecdon and leornodon.'⁶⁰ But whether or not Caedmon had Christian models cannot be proved, and to say he did contradicts (irresponsibly, I think) the authority of Bede and rationalises the miracle of the poetic gift in a work based on miracles;⁶¹ whereas Bede explicitly says that Caedmon both invited

59 In the monastery of this abbess there was a certain brother who was specially marked out by the grace of God, so that he used to compose godly and religious songs; thus, whatever he learned from the holy Scriptures by means of interpreters, he quickly turned into extremely delightful and moving poetry, in English, which was his own tongue.

HEGA, Bk 4.24, Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People, ed. and trans. Bertram Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), pp. 414 and 415.

⁶⁰ Sweet's Anglo-Saxon Reader in Prose and Verse, ed. Dorothy Whitelock (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), p. 48, ll. 72-74, macrons omitted.

⁶¹ E.g., F. G. Cassidy, 'A Symbolic Word-Group in Beowulf,' Medieval Literature and Folklore Studies: Essays in Honor of Francis Lee Utley, ed. Jerome Mandel and Bruce A. Rosenberg (New Brunswick, N. J.: Rutgers Univ. Press, 1970): 'The argument . . . that Caedmon must have known the method of song long before the time of his miraculous experience seems reasonable. . . . this adaptation [by lettered poets of oral-formulaic method to Christian purposes] began before Caedmon' (p. 345, n. 7). No one is likely to dispute 'the possibility of Christian poetry earlier than Caedmon in other areas of England' (Goldsmith, p. 17, emphasis mine). True, Bede does not mention Aldhelm's vernacular poetry. So what? Did it treat of Christian, Germanic, or Classical subjects? We cannot say. But we do know that Aldhelm loved pagan poetry: 'Whereas in

and defied imitation: that afterwards others--the Anglo-Saxon version has monige oðre (op. cit., p. 45, l. 10)--were taught to compose religious poems, none ever matching Caedmon's. On the contrary, what makes it clear that Caedmon's Hymn was a treasured model in the tradition of religious poetry are the seventeen extant manuscript copies of the poem (ASPR, VI, xciv). And the inference to be drawn from the story of Caedmon, it seems, is that in Caedmon, deeply religious, pure of heart, and well-liked, whose inspiration is the love of God, whose purpose is not only to praise God but also to lead the thoughts of men to spiritual things, whose themes are always serious and sacred, Bede is presenting the ideal Anglo-Saxon Christian poet. 'Caedmon gave the Anglo-Saxon models, but also the grounds for a theory. In virtue of the divinity of his own gift they had authority to deal faithfully, but as we should think also freely, with the text of Scriptures.'⁶² As Bede says in his Preface, 'Sive enim historia de bonis bona referat, ad imitandum bonum auditor sollicitus instigatur.'⁶³ Thus, with Creation itself as its subject, the model poem articulates the spiritual inspiration of the very

Aldhelm, notwithstanding his insistence that secular literature should only be a means to an end, the artist and admirer of great poetry particularly Virgil, overmasters the ecclesiastic; in Bede the religious teacher predominates' (M. L. W. Laistner, Thought and Letters in Western Europe: A.D. 500 to 900, London: Methuen, 1957, p. 158). Moreover, Bede speaks very highly of Aldhelm's learning and intellect (HEGA, Bk 5.18). On this score alone, his cerebral flair, I question Aldhelm's influence on Caedmon as a Christian poet.

⁶² Geoffrey Shepherd, 'Scriptural Poetry,' in Continuations and Beginnings: Studies in Old English Literature, ed. Eric Gerald Stanley (London: Nelson, 1966), p. 9.

⁶³ 'For if history records good things of good men, the thoughtful hearer is encouraged to imitate what is good.' HEGA, Preface, Colgrave and Mynors, p. 2; trans. Leo Sherley-Price, Bede: A History of the English Church and People, rev. R. E. Latham (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968), p. 33.

poetic creation it illustrates. In effect, then, Bede sanctions the composition and performance of Christian carmina as acts of divine worship and guarantees the value of their interpretation of Scripture.

Furthermore, had there been any pre-Caedmonian Anglo-Saxon models of Christian adaptation, Bede would have found it natural to mention them, as he must have been familiar with Latin precedents. The use of Biblical story as the subject-matter for poetry had been known for at least four centuries before the time of Caedmon. Scriptural adaptation was resorted to in a situation of similar social conditions encompassing the early Christian Church in Rome, where best-known was probably Evangeliorum Libri IV by Juvenius (fl. early fourth century). According to Alcuin he was being read in England by the eighth century.⁶⁴ Like the earlier Carmen Apologeticum of Commodian, the work is a doctrinal epic poem whose 'interest lies in the attempt to provide a Christian literature which might counteract the influence of the pagan poets by showing that the Church had her own heroic story, her own epic of the incarnation, the wonderful life, death, and resurrection of the Saviour.'⁶⁵ Also on Alcuin's list of authors in the library at York is Sedulius (Ogilvy, p. 79). His fifth century Carmen Paschale deals with the miracles of the Old and New Testaments and is full of allegorical and symbolic interpretations of the material, the treatment characteristic of both Christian

⁶⁴ J. D. A. Ogilvy, Books Known to Anglo-Latin Writers from Aldhelm to Alcuin (670-804), Studies and Documents, No. 2 (Cambridge, Mass.: Mediaeval Academy of America, 1936), p. 59.

⁶⁵ F. J. E. Raby, A History of Christian-Latin Poetry from the Beginnings to the Close of the Middle Ages (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1927), pp. 13, 17-18.

poetry and Biblical exegesis during the early Middle Ages.⁶⁶ Though we cannot know the extent of the familiarity in England of Christian-Latin works like those of Commodian, Juvenecus, and Sedulius, we have proof that their number was large and, judging from what we know of the English zeal for learning, we may reasonably assume that they knew such works as these.

From our knowledge of Anglo-Saxon and kindred literature we know that Caedmon's singing must have caused quite a stir among his neighbours, inasmuch as an Anglo-Saxon oral poet was socially esteemed not merely for his exceptional memory, worldly wisdom, and his mastery of the language, but also for the truth he spoke and the entertainment he served forth: 'His power of moulding public opinion secured for him marked consideration from the great and powerful.'⁶⁷ Thus the Anglo-Saxon poetic imagination had a unique prerogative to intervene in society, to summon it to its best ends, to interpret the world for it, and to voice its highest and noblest values, human and heroic: in short, to criticise Anglo-Saxon life.⁶⁸ Moreover, the

⁶⁶ Raby, p. 108. James W. Bright, 'The Relation of the Caedmonian Exodus to the Liturgy,' MLN, 27, No. 4 (1912), sees it as the 'predecessor' of Exodus (p. 101).

⁶⁷ L[ewis] F[lint] Anderson, The Anglo-Saxon Scop [, Philological Series, No. 1] ([Toronto: Univ. of Toronto,] 1903), p. 45.

⁶⁸ Malcolm Bradbury, The Social Context of Modern English Literature (Oxford: Blackwell, 1971), p. xiv. It is in this sense of course that literature is a shaping force in society. That it was such a force in Anglo-Saxon society can be seen in the obvious example of Beowulf, which is at once descriptive and didactic (in the Eliotan sense of the word, i.e., 'conveying information' and/or 'giving moral instruction,' op. cit., p. 16). Eliot's idea that poetry is a constituent of a nation's social personality or culture (pp. 22-23) helps to account for the extreme difficulty of trying to measure the influence of written Anglo-Saxon poetry in English culture generally. Not being a homogeneous nation, the people living in England before the Norman Conquest lacked social cohesion to the extent that the effect of the new Christian poetry on their language and linguistic sensibility was both diffuse and syncopated. See, too, Shepherd, pp. 7-8.

scop's verbal skill meant he could tell the truth attractively. So it was sound tactics that the Anglo-Saxon clergy should be trained to perform the function of the scop and thereby instruct men in Scriptural history and doctrine, the husk heathen, the kernel Christian:

fana idolorum destrui in eadem gente minime debeant,
sed ipsa quae in eis sunt idola destruantur, aqua
benedicta fiat, in eisdem fanis aspergatur, altaria
construantur, reliquiae ponantur. Quia, si fana
eadem bene constructa sunt, necesse est ut a cultu
daemonum in obsequio veri Dei debeant commutari 69

Since Caedmon became a brother, there probably existed two categories of Christian Anglo-Saxon poets, the illiterate (like, but not as good as, Caedmon) due to the sporadic and limited spread of literacy, and the literate (like his imitators) in and around the monasteries. The latter are our interest.

At least one critic believes that most Anglo-Saxon poetic texts are the work of so-called writer-poets whose deliberate adoption of 'oral characteristics of style for compositional purposes beyond the scope of oral poetry' we ought to appreciate for what it is, because 'our knowledge of this technique will lead us to a more adequate interpretation of [their] work'; and another critic that 'the written poetry was of monastic origin, definitely for a religious purpose and addressed to a more or less instructed class for their edification

69 the idol temples of that race should by no means be destroyed, but only the idols in them. Take holy water and sprinkle it in these shrines, build altars and place relics in them. For if the shrines are built well, it is essential that they should be changed from the worship of devils to the service of the true God.

Gregory's instruction to Abbot Mellitus (A.D. 601) in HEGA, Bk 1.30, Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 106 and 107. Similarly, in the Proem to his translation of the Metres of Boethius, Alfred is said to have given spiritual advice to his people in their native tongue.

or amusement.⁷⁰ Both these views imply, as it were, a cultural incompatibility of ideas. But we should not think that the monastic natives were completely intellectually divorced from Christians living outside the monasteries. For, so long as the Anglo-Saxon clergy had to be taught in their mother-tongue because they knew very little or no Latin, their thoughts (including religious) were not totally free of their traditional pagan beliefs. 'The Anglo-Saxons and their poets would be censored by the Church, but not brainwashed.'⁷¹ Historical records reveal the truth of this assertion. The notion of such a syncretism takes into account Alcuin's annoyance and, more than that, means that, composed by pen either to be learned by heart and then recited, or simply to be read aloud, the same Christian poetry could be used to edify or entertain both clerical and lay Anglo-Saxon Christians.

Yet, obviously, clerical instruction in classical and patristic thought did mean that the spiritual content of the poetry was not equally accessible to learned and lewd: clerical Anglo-Saxons would have a knowledge of at least the Bible and the writings of the Church Fathers, and so would be aware of the methods of Scriptural exegesis. They would see Christian truth more deeply than an untrained audience. Contrariwise, 'an initiated illiterate audience can accept and enjoy in poetry much that is obscure and allusive or symbolic in expression' (Goldsmith, pp. 63-64). Both preacher and poet

⁷⁰ Michael Curschmann, 'Oral Poetry in Mediaeval English, French, and German Literature: Some Notes on Recent Research,' *Speculum*, 42, No. 1 (1967), 49; Ritchie Girvan, 'The Medieval Poet and His Public,' in *English Studies Today*, Papers Read at the International Conference of University Professors of English, Magdalen College, Oxford, Aug. 1950, ed. G. Bullough and C. L. Wrenn (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1951), p. 93.

⁷¹ Ursula Dronke, 'Beowulf and Ragnarok,' p. 304.

faced an audience expecting the enigmatic and the figurative.⁷²

To appreciate the poetry fully, then, we must assume that the Anglo-Saxon poet's didactic purpose was always a Christian one, firmly in the patristic tradition and consonant with the cultivated and studied rhetoric of Augustinian pedagogics as outlined in, for example, his De Doctrina Christiana, which was designed both to enlighten 'the private Christian of only moderate learning' and to instruct the future preacher.⁷³ Furthermore, according to Augustine, a Christian work of literature is one that, having nothing flashy in its texture, promotes either the love of God and man or the understanding of God and man. Augustine urges the reader to be prepared to ponder what he hears or reads, and to search for the figurative meaning whenever the literal meaning does not openly indicate purity of life (love) or soundness of doctrine (understanding), or does not establish the reign of love.⁷⁴ In other words, even if the material is pagan, the thematic implications of truly Christian poetry are controlled by its artistic purpose (meaning) and poetic intention (technique). But there is more. Augustine also guided writers: 'Est autem grammatica vocis articulatae custos et moderatrix disciplina.'⁷⁵ Hence, the figurative method of interpretative reading can be seen

⁷² See Fred C. Robinson, 'Lexicography and Literary Criticism: A Caveat,' in Philological Essays: Studies in Old and Middle English Language and Literature in Honour of Herbert Dean Meritt, ed. James L. Rosier (The Hague: Mouton, 1970), pp. 99-110, esp. p. 104.

⁷³ Charles Donahue, 'Patristic Exegesis in the Criticism of Medieval Literature: Summation,' in Critical Approaches to Medieval Literature: Selected Papers from the English Institute, 1958-1959, ed. Dorothy Bethurum (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1960), pp. 68-69.

⁷⁴ Bk 3.10.14-16 and Bk 3.15.23, CL 32.86-87 and 91.

⁷⁵ 'Literary criticism is the art which guards and controls composition.' Soliloquia, Bk 2.11.19, PL 32.894; translation mine.

in the work of Aldhelm and Bede, who set the intellectual and clerical background against which we read Anglo-Saxon poetry. Anglo-Saxon poetry, therefore, can be considered as the artistic embodiment of these Augustinian aims.⁷⁶

As to patristic exegesis, we must be careful to avoid the dogmatic extremism of critics who boldly assume that all mediaeval poetry (including Anglo-Saxon, therefore) is 'always allegorical when the message of charity or some corollary of it is not evident on the surface.'⁷⁷ Saner, one feels, is E. Talbot Donaldson's argument that the Christian allegorical approach should be taken only if it leads to an otherwise inaccessible appreciation of a poem. Context, he says, will in fact demand such an explication.⁷⁸

But Donaldson confines his remarks to Middle English poetry, leaving open the question of patristic influence on Anglo-Saxon poetry. The issue is simplified, however, by the fact that extant Anglo-Saxon poetry is, for historical reasons (preserved as it was by the clergy), almost totally religious (i.e., has a Christian purpose). And the safest hypothesis, therefore, is that all Anglo-Saxon poetry is, in essence, religious, and that if in a few poems the Christian purpose is obscure, this is due to ruined manuscripts,

⁷⁶ This is of course the main thesis of Bernard F. Huppé's tentative yet stimulating study, Doctrine and Poetry: Augustine's Influence on Old English Poetry (New York: State Univ. of New York, 1959): 'Since the body of OE poetry is Christian, it should be studied, whatever its subject, from the point of view of basic [Augustinian] theory and practice' (p. 239).

⁷⁷ D. W. Robertson, Jr, 'Historical Criticism,' in English Institute Essays, 1950, ed. Alan S. Downer (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1951), p. 14.

⁷⁸ 'Patristic Exegesis in the Criticism of Medieval Literature: The Opposition,' in Critical Approaches to Medieval Literature . . ., pp. 5, 2.

textual corruption, or simply to the poem's opacity through cultural refraction. Rather than try to accommodate the luxurious complexity of conjecture, we should proceed with what we do know, the monastic texts.

If we now seem to be returning to the allegorical extreme, it is important to note that Augustine does not rigidly restrict Scriptural interpretation to the reductively symbolic, but includes the metaphoric as well. He characterises both as figurative; and the figurative in Scripture he calls the spiritual sense (e.g., Bk 3.5.9 and Bk 3.10.14). This broad understanding of the figurative reveals itself in R. E. Kaske's defence that 'a civilised Christian writer will use ["religious" imagery] with objective artistry, as a meaningful, evocative, and perhaps unique image of what he is trying to express. . . . The interpreter of such imagery must not be content to reduce it indiscriminately to the most inclusive and uniform terms, but must analyse carefully its precise meanings in its particular contexts' (ibid., pp. 28-29). In the end, it is thematic context that determines the degree to which a portion of the text is figurative; patristic tradition merely supplies the appropriate images, always Christian but not always reductively symbolic.

Cassidy's warning is comprehensively moderate:

The fact that certain words acquired or were loaded with secondary symbolic reference of Christian portent means neither that they were thereby deprived of their literal or non-Christian meanings, nor that every instance of their use perforce included the secondary symbolic reference. The latter should be seen as potential--ready to be used by the poet when he chooses, and to be understood by the hearers or readers only when some clue to it is clearly present in the context. Such a clue is often, though not necessarily, verbal; it may be given, for example, simply by parallelism of incident or character. In parable fashion: "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." 79

⁷⁹ Op. cit., p. 33. See, too, Goldsmith, pp. 69-70.

My aim in this section has been to show how the conversion of the Anglo-Saxons to Christianity changed the social function of their heroic poetry, and at the same time changed the meaning of a traditional pagan symbol, the sea. Incorporating a Christian dimension, such sea-imagery, embodying the ideals of two cultures, inevitably became doubly metaphoric.

(111)

Before we can discuss the use of the sea as a metaphor in Anglo-Saxon poetry, we must investigate briefly the question of literary metaphor in general, concentrating on and reconciling mediaeval and modern theory of poetic metaphor. Above all, we are looking for a working definition of poetic metaphor that will produce a fruitful analysis of an Anglo-Saxon poem. However, I do not intend either to prove or to disprove any particular theory of metaphor: I have simply selected for discussion those theories which I have considered useful for the critical analyses that follow.

The prototypical theory of metaphor is Aristotle's generic or proportional one, in which he describes the logical dimension of metaphor:

Metaphor is the application of the name of a thing to something else, working either (a) from genus to species, or (b) from species to genus, or (c) from species to species, or (d) by proportion. . . . Metaphor by proportion occurs when the second term is related to the first in the same way as the fourth to the third; then the poet may use the second in lieu of the fourth, or vice versa. 80

Or, in more general terms, 'a device for seeing something in terms of

⁸⁰ *Poetics*, Ch. 21; trans. Gerald F. Else (Ann Arbor, Mich.: Univ. of Michigan Press, 1967), p. 57.

something else,⁸¹ metaphor 'conveys a relation between two things by using a word (or words) figuratively instead of literally.'⁸² To avoid confusion I shall borrow I. A. Richards's critical terms for these two things, namely, 'tenor' (the principal subject) and 'vehicle' (the logically incongruous subject).⁸³ Duality is at the heart of most theories of metaphor. But there is more to metaphor than merely a parallel arrangement of corresponding elements: 'There must be an initial similarity between them to make the metaphor possible';⁸⁴ and not merely an overt similarity either, for that would result in open simile, but an implied one.⁸⁵ As Marcus Hester points out: 'The analogy view can adequately deal with the rigorous explicit metaphor of the metaphysical poets . . . but is inadequate with regard to the implicit suggestiveness of the

⁸¹ Kenneth Burke, A Grammar of Motives (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1945), Appendix D, p. 503.

⁸² Winifred Nowottny, The Language Poets Use (London: Athlone Press, 1962), p. 52.

⁸³ I. A. Richards, The Philosophy of Rhetoric (New York and London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1936), pp. 96-97.

⁸⁴ Paul Henle, 'Metaphor,' in Language, Thought, and Culture, ed. Paul Henle (Ann Arbor, Mich.: Univ. of Michigan Press, 1958), p. 191.

⁸⁵ Similarity, of course, implies dissimilarity, and 'in general, there are very few metaphors in which disparities between tenor and vehicle are not as much operative as the similarities' (Richards, p. 94). Aristotle later recognises similitude as an aesthetic element (Poetics, Ch. 22), and in his Rhetoric points out that to invent a (good) metaphor one needs the sagacity to perceive sameness in things that are different (Bk 3.11.5). Aristotle thus makes some incidental comments on the psychological action of metaphor, but the emphasis in his discussion of metaphor seems to be on its logical character.

romantic or symbolist poet.⁸⁶

The mediaeval tradition, following Cicero, also recognises this essential characteristic of poetic metaphor: 'si simile nihil habet, repudiatur.'⁸⁷ Explaining how metaphor works, Cicero regards, as necessary for the clear perception of it, the experience of seeing something as something else: 'Quod enim declarari vix verbo proprio potest, id translato cum est dictum, illustrat id quod intellegi volumus eius rei quam alieno verbo posuimus similitudo.'⁸⁸ Modern theory of poetic metaphor also agrees with Cicero's observations which suggest the psychological dimension of metaphor: metaphor, he says, not only ad sensos ipsos admovetur but also projects things in conspectu animi, i.e., as images.⁸⁹ Indeed, as Hester says, 'the

⁸⁶ Marcus B. Hester, The Meaning of Poetic Metaphor: An Analysis in the Light of Wittgenstein's Claim that Meaning is Use (The Hague: Mouton, 1967), p. 14.

⁸⁷ 'if it contains no similarity it is rejected.' De Oratore, Bk 3.39.157, trans. H. Rackham, LCL (1942), II, 122 and 123. In his Orator (Ch. 27.92), Cicero speaks of metaphors as translata verba "'transferred" words,' by which he means per similitudinem . . . transferuntur 'transferred by resemblance' (trans. H. M. Hubbell, LCL, 1939, pp. 372 and 373). For a brief but fuller discussion of classical theory of metaphor, see A. D. Leeman, Orationis Ratio: The Stylistic Theories and Practices of the Roman Orators, Historians and Philosophers (Amsterdam: Hakkert, 1963), I, 125-32.

⁸⁸ 'The explanation is that when something that can scarcely be conveyed by the proper term is expressed metaphorically, the meaning we desire to convey is made clear by the resemblance of the thing that we have expressed by the word that does not belong.' De Oratore, Bk 3.38.155, trans. Rackham, loc. cit.

⁸⁹ Ibid., Bk 3.40.160-61, Rackham, p. 126. Quintilian, too, treats metaphor extensively in his Institutio Oratoria (Bk 8.6.4-18), and though he, like Aristotle, does not stress similitude, he does refer to the mental activity involved in metaphoric occurrence and underlines the basically aesthetic value (longe pulcherrimus) of literary metaphor. Metaphor, he goes on to say, 'permovendis animis plerumque et signandis rebus ac sub oculis subiiciendis reperta est,' i.e., 'is designed to move feelings, give special distinction to things and place them vividly before the eye' (Bk 8.6.19, trans. H. E. Butler, LCL, III, 1922, 310 and 311).

meaning of poetic metaphor involves imagery' (p. 23), since poetic metaphor is a fusion of meaning and imagery ('the representation in poetry of any sense experience'⁹⁰), and the relevant sense of the metaphor is the way its vehicle and tenor are related by the images they generate (Hester, pp. 187-88).

In addition to its communicative and informative value, Cicero sees the curious pleasure to be derived from discovering the meaning of metaphor and, like Augustine, makes a special point of this aspect.⁹¹ In attempting to account for the pleasurable effect of metaphor, Cicero implies that metaphor has a content bisemantic in the same plane.⁹² As far as he is concerned, every metaphor contains two

⁹⁰ Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren, Understanding Poetry, 3rd ed. (New York: Holt, 1960), p. 555.

⁹¹ Cicero, De Oratore, Bk 3.39.159, trans. Rackham, pp. 124 and 125: 'persaepe mihi admirandum videtur quid sit quod omnes translatis et alienis magis delectantur verbis quam propriis et suis.' 'I very often feel it a curious point to inquire why it is that everybody derives more pleasure from words used metaphorically and not in their proper sense than from the proper names belonging to the objects.'

Augustine, De Doctrina Christiana, Bk 2.6.8., CL 32.36; translation mine:

Sed quare suavius videam, quam si nulla de divinis libris talis similitudo promeretur, cum res eadem sit eademque cognitio, difficile est dicere et alia quaestio est. Nunc tamen nemo ambigit . . . per similitudines libentius quaeque cognosci.
(But why I should find it more delightful than if no such analogy were taken from Scripture, though the matter would be the same and the point still be made, it is hard to say and is another question. But one thing is certain . . . it is more pleasing to grasp some things by means of analogies.)

⁹² 'Id ideo accidere credo . . . quod ingenii specimen est quoddam transilire ante pedes posita et alia longe repetita sumere.' 'I suppose the cause of this is . . . that it is a mark of cleverness of a kind to jump over things that are obvious and choose other things that are far-fetched.' De Oratore, Bk 3.40.160, trans. Rackham, loc. cit.

symbols, one pointing to the obvious idea where there is another pointing to an unexpected idea.⁹³

It seems appropriate and convenient at this point to say something more particularly about the symbol which, together with metaphor, is what I mean by figurative language. 'A symbol, in the broadest sense of the word, is that which means.'⁹⁴ The literary symbol is an embodiment of a meaning beyond itself, whether in the form of an image or an object. The symbol, then, is a metonym: a concrete representation of an intangible reality.⁹⁵ In mediaeval poetics it can have the value of a sacrament,⁹⁶ the created, material world being a copy of the invisible, ideal world of the spirit ('Invisibilia enim ipsius, a creatura mundi, per ea quae facta sunt, intellecta, conspiciuntur,' Romans 1.20). All Nature is a signum translatum both meaning itself and pointing to God, the ultimate res.

The criteria by which we decide whether or not an element or a portion of a poem is symbolic are context⁹⁷ --though the symbol does

⁹³ 'quod eae propter similitudinem transferunt animos et referunt ac movent huc et illuc, qui motus cogitationis celeriter agitatus per se ipse delectat.' 'because these figures [i.e., metaphors] by virtue of the comparison involved transport the mind and bring it back, and move it hither and thither; and this rapid stimulation of thought in itself produces pleasure.' *Orator*, Ch. 39.134, trans. Hubbell, pp. 406 and 407.

⁹⁴ Philip Wheelwright, The Burning Fountain: A Study in the Language of Symbolism (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana Univ. Press, 1964), p. 18.

⁹⁵ Kenneth Burke, 'Four Master Tropes,' Kenyon Review, 3 (Autumn 1941), 424.

⁹⁶ C. S. Lewis, The Allegory of Love: A Study in Medieval Tradition (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1936), pp. 45-46.

⁹⁷ L. C. Knights, 'Idea and Symbol: Some Hints from Coleridge,' in Metaphor and Symbol, Proceedings of the Twelfth Symposium of the Colston Research Society, Univ. of Bristol, ed. L. C. Knights and Basil Cottle (London: Butterworths, 1960), p. 136.

not have metaphor's contextual incongruence--and repetition of images;⁹⁸ in other words, it is a matter of thematic structure. Finally, in poetry, a metaphor becomes a symbol when (a) its vehicle is concrete and sensuous and (b) it itself is recurrent and central (ibid., p. 300). Such a symbol takes its meaning not only from a whole culture or literary tradition, i.e., from many contexts, but also from the narrower context of the specific poem in which it has its new life.

For his discussion of literary symbolism, Augustine distinguishes between 'things' (res) and 'symbols' (signa). Obviously, all symbols are things but not all things are symbols,⁹⁹ though any thing may be used as a symbol of another thing (alia res).¹⁰⁰ He then divides symbols into two classes: natural (naturalia), e.g., smoke signifying fire, and intentional (data), e.g., a bugle-call on the battlefield.¹⁰¹ But, for Augustine, the prime examples of intentional symbols are words, which are symbols used by men or by God through men, and the

⁹⁸ René Wellek and Austin Warren, Theory of Literature, 3rd ed. (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1963), p. 189.

⁹⁹ 'Omnis doctrina vel rerum est vel signorum . . . Quam ob rem omne signum etiam res aliqua est . . . non autem omnis res etiam signum est.' Op. cit., Bk 1.2.2, CL 32.7.

¹⁰⁰ 'Hae namque ita res sunt, ut aliarum etiam signa sint rerum' (loc. cit.). In De Magistro, an epistemological dialogue, Augustine offers a more rigorous linguistic approach to symbolism.

¹⁰¹ Signorum igitur alia sunt naturalia, alia data. Naturalia sunt, quae sine voluntate atque ullo appetitu significandi praeter se aliquid aliud ex se cognosci faciunt, sicuti est fumus significans ignem. . . . Data vero signa sunt, quae sibi quaeque viventia invicem dant ad demonstrandos, quantum possunt, motus animi sui vel sensa aut intellecta quaelibet.

De Doctrina Christiana, Bk 2.1.2-2.2.3, CL 32.32-33.

primary means of indicating the thoughts of the mind.¹⁰²

Now, there are two kinds of intentional symbol: proprium, that which is never used except to signify something, e.g., the syllable 'ox' as used to signify the four-legged animal, and translatum, that which is used to signify something other than its usual signification, e.g., the ox, the animal itself, as used to signify a preacher of the Gospel in the context of St Paul's letter to the Corinthians, in which he interprets the Mosaic commandment 'Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn' (Douay version).¹⁰³ The syllable 'ox' signifies the animal only. The animal, in its turn, symbolises the preacher of the Gospel;¹⁰⁴ that is to say, at the same time as the ox is a thing (res), it is also a symbol of something else (alia res).

From this it follows, though Augustine himself does not explicate the inference, that if the signification (res) of a word operates as a signum and resembles the alia res, then the word itself also signifies the resemblance. Thus, the word functions as a

¹⁰² Ibid., Bk 2.2.3-2.3.4, CL 32.33-34.

¹⁰³ Sunt autem signa vel propria vel translata. Propria dicuntur, cum his rebus significandis adhibentur, propter quas sunt instituta, sicut dicimus bovem, cum intellegimus pecus, quod omnes nobiscum latinae linguae homines hoc nomine vocant. Translata sunt, cum et ipsae res, quas propriis verbis significamus, ad aliquid aliud significandum usurpantur, sicut dicimus bovem et per has duas syllabas intellegimus pecus, quod isto nomine appellari solet, sed rursus per illud pecus intellegimus evangelistam, quem significavit scriptura interpretante apostolo dicens: bovem triturantem non infrenabis.

Ibid., Bk 2.10.15, CL 32.41. See Deuteronomy 25.4 and 1 Corinthians 9.9.

¹⁰⁴ Johan Chydenius, 'The Theory of Medieval Symbolism,' Societas Scientiarum Fennica Commentationes Humanarum Litterarum, 27, No. 2 (1961), 15.

signum translatum and may more accurately be called a verbum translatum, i.e., a metaphor.¹⁰⁵ Bede, again, neatly combines the aspects of resemblance and symbolism when he defines a trope as a dictio translata a propria significatione ad non propriam similitudinem 'an expression used to signify something similar to its usual signification.'¹⁰⁶ And this, in fact, is also the modern position. Ullmann, for one, speaks of 'the perspective of "double vision" peculiar to metaphor'¹⁰⁷ and Henle, for another, of 'the double symbolism of metaphor' (op. cit., p. 178). In poetic metaphor, then, similitudo relates the res and the alia res in such a way that the signum proprium also signifies the alia res.

An understanding of the stereoscopic nature of metaphoric symbolism helps one to grasp the semantic tension in the literary metaphor that Richards calls 'a transaction between contexts' (p. 94) and Josephine Miles stresses as 'metaphor's wrench from essence into context.'¹⁰⁸ The word 'context' bears some strain here: whereas

¹⁰⁵ Cf. 'Propria sunt verba, cum id significant, in quod primo denominata sunt; translata, cum alium natura intellectum alium loco praebent.' 'Words are proper when they bear their original meaning; metaphorical, when they are used in a sense different from their natural meaning.' Quintilian, op. cit., Bk 1.5.71, trans. Butler, I (1921), 110 and 111.

¹⁰⁶ De Schematibus et Tropis, in Rhetores Latini Minores, ed. Carolus Halm (1863; facsim. rpt. Frankfurt: Minerva, 1964), p. 611, ll. 19-20; translation mine. Cf. verbi vel sermonis a propria significatione in aliam cum virtute mutatio 'the artistic alteration of a word or phrase from its proper meaning to another' (Quintilian, op. cit., Bk 8.6.1, trans. Butler, III, 300 and 301). Bede is taking this idea even further, in fact, when he describes a certain trope in which metaphors are used as symbols, viz., allegoria quae verbis fit, which is what nowadays we understand allegory to be (Chydenius, p. 17).

¹⁰⁷ Stephen Ullmann, Style in the French Novel (1957; rpt. Oxford: Blackwell, 1964), p. 214.

¹⁰⁸ Josephine Miles, Style and Proportion: The Language of Prose and Poetry (Boston: Little & Brown, 1967), p. 126.

Richards means situations of (psychological) experience, Miles is talking about a linguistic situation.¹⁰⁹ Both are relevant to this discussion because the essence of metaphor, as I see it, is a conversation between meanings. In the following classic definition of metaphor, the notion of a more general context is skilfully accommodated:

[Metaphor is] the process and result of using a term (X) normally signifying an object or concept (A) in such a context that it must refer to another object or concept (B) which is distinct enough in characteristics from A to ensure that in the composite idea formed by the synthesis of the concepts A and B and now symbolized in the word X, the factors A and B retain their conceptual independence even while they emerge in the unity symbolized by X. 110

Or, putting all this in another way: if denotations and connotations provide the link between a signum proprium and its res, then context connects the res and an alia res which together form a new signification of the original signum proprium.¹¹¹ Inside a metaphor there is

¹⁰⁹ In Interpretation in Teaching (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1938), 'the words which surround [a metaphor] in the utterance, and the other contemporaneous signs which govern its interpretation' Richards calls setting (p. viii). Awareness of such a context, albeit an oversimplification, is obviously necessary in dealing with poetry of a 'dead' language, such as that of Anglo-Saxon English, where the reader must enjoy whatever his mind finds latent, volatile, and corroborated and confirmed by the rest of the poem: 'The reader pieces out the metaphor by something supplied or constructed from his own experience, according to the specifications given linguistically by the utterance in which the metaphor occurs' (Nowotny, p. 59). Cf. Wellek and Warren's idea of 'ritual' metaphor (pp. 196-97).

¹¹⁰ W. Bedell Stanford, Greek Metaphor: Studies in Theory and Practice (Oxford: Blackwell, 1936), p. 101; quoted by W. K. Wimsatt, Jr., The Verbal Icon: Studies in the Meaning of Poetry (1954; London: Methuen, 1970), p. 128.

¹¹¹ 'A sign is metaphorical if in a particular instance of its occurrence it is used to denote an object which it does not literally denote in virtue of its signification, but which has some of the properties which its genuine denotata have,' Charles Morris, Sign, Language and Behaviour (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1946), p. 136.

really a third dimension of meaning, communicable only through the symbolism of the metaphor.¹¹² Metaphor, then, is not merely the use of a particular sign to denote something it ordinarily does not denote; it is the meaningful use of a sign in such a manner.

Meaningful to whom? To the poet and his audience, in their mind, while the poem lasts.

Max Black, proceeding on Richards's guideline (The Philosophy of Rhetoric, p. 93), brings the two situations together in his 'interaction' theory of metaphor.¹¹³ According to this view, some characteristic or quality true of the subsidiary subject is plainly seen to be true of the principal subject also, the subjects being regarded as 'systems of things' rather than simply as 'things.' The metaphor works by applying to the principal subject a system of 'commonplaces' (or connotations) associated with the subsidiary subject, which thus selects, emphasises, and organises the features of the principal subject. Furthermore, although the associated commonplaces supply the connotations of a term, it is possible for a poet to establish a new system of associations and implications for a term before he uses it as the vehicle of a metaphor. Again, some words belonging to the same system as the metaphoric expression will take on new meanings, which may also be metaphoric (pp. 43-45).

But this raises at least two problems. First, what is the extent of a metaphor's verbal context? Black does not specify. Consequently, the personification in 'gearo guðfreca goldmaðmas heold' (Beowulf, ASPR, IV, 2414), for example, refers to an event intelligible only within the larger context of the Dragon-fight.

¹¹² Cf. Knights, p. 135; Wimsatt, pp. 79, 129.

¹¹³ 'Metaphor,' in Models and Metaphors, pp. 38-47.

And this brings us to the second problem: that it can happen that one of a metaphor's components may fail to evoke sufficient associations for interaction to occur. The complex image that concludes Cynewulf's Ascension, for instance, asserts not merely the analogy between a sea-voyage and spiritual life, nor merely the illumination of the one by the other, but the identity of the two experiences. They are emotionally equivalent, coinciding precisely in intensity, exertion, doubt, joy, security, and rest. The interaction scheme is inadequate here because it fails to comprehend how the spiritual life, in turn, illuminates the sea-voyage. That is, the tenor evokes so few associations that there simply can be no interaction, no mutual shaping of tenorial and vehicular systems of connotations. Similarly, a barren vehicle would also preclude an interactive explication.

But the Cynewulfian metaphor cannot be treated as merely verbal, merely a transference of language. It must be thought of as representing a domain of human experience; it must be understood as a faithful replica in words of the structure or network of relationships and coincidences in an actual sea-voyage. This kind of metaphor, the fusion or iconic metaphor, presents multiple correlations between two processes, so that analysing the structure of such an iconic vehicle reveals the similarity of the tenor's structure.¹¹⁴ Cynewulf discovers, through the vehicle of a sea-voyage, the structure

¹¹⁴ Barbara Leondar, 'The Structure and Function of Metaphor,' Diss. Harvard 1968, pp. 64-68. In a note on the title of his book, The Verbal Icon, Wimsatt writes: 'The term icon is used today by semelotic writers to refer to a verbal sign which somehow shares the properties of, or resembles, the objects which it denotes. The same term in its more usual meaning refers to a visual image and especially to one which is a religious symbol. The verbal image which most fully realizes its verbal capacities is that which is not merely a bright picture (in the usual modern meaning of the term image) but also an interpretation of reality in its metaphoric and symbolic dimensions' (p. x).

of interrelated experiences inhering in the Christian life.

Was se drohtað strong
 ærþon we to londe geliden hæfdon
 ofer hreone hrycg. (ASPR, III, 856b-58a)

These lines propose a marine icon whose essential principle is the physical progression of struggle, strength, and security. The Christian life, the metaphor says, demands spiritual experience, stamina, and exertion in the face of doubt and overwhelming forces of destruction, if the soul is to find safety in the place that has been prepared for it. Thus, if we are to endure being tossed 'geond þas wacan woruld' (855a), we must 'to þære hyðe hyht stapelian,/ ða us gerymde rodera waldend,/ halge on heahþu' (864a-66a). Then, too, in the Christian poet's recounting the salvation of the soul, the Christian life recapitulates a sea-voyage in the poetic image. Meanwhile, the metaphoric vehicle is itself being subtly modified by an actual sea-voyage. Because the Christian life is a self-denial and 'otherworldly,' sea-travel is made to seem so; so that a sea-journey, a time of constant alertness and concentrated navigation, becomes, in effect, a striving or even a longing to reach land again. (Such an attitude of mind is made strikingly explicit in The Seafarer.) It is in this way that, embodied in the structure of the metaphor, the meanings of Cynewulf's image realise themselves.

In the interactive metaphor, two systems of connotations interact; in the fusion metaphor, a single structure represents two structures of the interrelated processes of experience. So it is that the Beowulf-poet, through the vehicle of the sea-burial, illuminates the interrelated processes governing national history. The metaphor conceives of one event in terms of another. But unlike the interaction metaphor, it represents that event as ineffable except in terms of that other. It represents the span of the glory of the Scyldings in

terms of the appointed motion of the sea. The Proem asserts the identity of the two phenomena in the order of things. The fusion (or iconic) view of metaphor is to be preferred, then, to the interaction one when we want to appreciate accurately the correlative structure beneath vehicle and tenor.

Similarly, by extension, to conceive of the whole of Beowulf as a vehicle whose tenor (or tenors) is some segment of human experience is to conceive of it as an analogue, an icon; that is, as a network of relations among character, action, and image, since 'a poem in its various levels and relations of meaning has a kind of rounded being or substance and a metaphoric relation to reality' (Wimsatt, p. 217). The poem may then be said to impute to some segment of human experience a relational structure isomorphous with its own. Beowulf, for example, may then be read as a vehicle whose tenor is (the structure of) heroism, say, or more specifically, (of) sapientia et fortitudo,¹¹⁵ in the Anglo-Saxon universe, and whose interrelationships of character, action, and image represent (the network of) relations obtaining in that universe. This is to read Beowulf not as an allegory but as a representation that incarnates and expresses a principle not otherwise expressible with the same precision and effect. And what seems true of the whole poem seems true of its individual images and sets of images as well. The metaphors of wintry seas, for instance, propose an analogue for the nature of fæhð, so that Beowulf's experience of the swimming-match is seen to be isomorphous with his experience of overcoming Unferth's antagonism; just as in the Finn-episode the icebound sea is iconic of Hengest's frustrated vengeance.

¹¹⁵ R. E. Kaske, 'Sapientia et Fortitudo as the Controlling Theme of Beowulf,' SP, 55, No. 3 (1958), 423-56.

An important corollary of this metaphoric principle is that an imaginative fiction can have verisimilitude; that is, the structure of a poem can be isomorphous with experience, while the details of the poem may not be true to life: its iconicity need not be literally representative. So it is that a poem retains its meaning and accrues value, not through its accurately factual representation of human reality, but rather through its structural iconicity of human experience, a realism that transcends its idiosyncratic context of (in Eliot's phrase) 'race, place, and time.'¹¹⁶ The cultural context merely contributes to a poem's meaning, for, as Wellek and Warren point out:

The meaning of a work of art is not exhausted by, or even equivalent to, its intention. As a system of values, it leads an independent life. The total meaning of a work of art cannot be defined merely in terms of its meaning for the author and his contemporaries. It is rather the result of a process of accretion, i.e. the history of its criticism by its many readers in many ages. (p. 42)

(iv)

The descriptions of the sea in Anglo-Saxon poems have, for the most part, been regarded as largely eccentric and ecphrastic, ornamental and unrealistic.¹¹⁷ But the Anglo-Saxon sea itself, for cultural reasons, has figurative significance, so that a description of the sea in an Anglo-Saxon poem is doubly figurative: in respect of both the sea and the language. A sea passage embodies a cultural consciousness of a spiritual order in the created universe. The

¹¹⁶ 'The Humanism of Irving Babbitt,' in Selected Essays, 3rd ed. (London: Faber, 1951), pp. 474-75.

¹¹⁷ See, for example, Adeline Courtney Bartlett, The Larger Rhetorical Patterns in Anglo-Saxon Poetry (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1935), p. 82.

import of a sea passage is not so much in its physical aspects alone as in its emotional, intellectual, moral, and spiritual implications. This is hardly new. Albert H. Tolman said something similar nearly a century ago:

The imagination must be satisfied by a metaphor, rather than the sense by a strict description or narrative. In order to satisfy the imagination, also, causes, consequences, and accompaniments are often portrayed rather than the action or object itself, or at least more fully. 118

To achieve an effective figurative coherence a poem may possess carefully selected details that do not convey a complete picture in purely realistic terms.¹¹⁹ The local realistic details may thus be made to serve the larger figurative interests of the poem (Stanley, p. 481).

Important sea-passages are generally woven into the narrative fabric of an Anglo-Saxon poem in such a way that it is impossible to separate them from the poem as a whole. In the analyses that follow, a sea passage has been treated as important if it contains images which are (a) marine or maritime, i.e., in, on, near, or of the sea, and (b) textually proximate, forming a cluster or set. Sometimes, descriptions of the sea in an Anglo-Saxon poem are incidental and fragmentary, but the following analyses deal only with the larger accumulations of sea images that are narrationally important.

¹¹⁸ 'The Style of Anglo-Saxon Poetry,' PMLA, 3 (1887), 42.

¹¹⁹ 'The extensive use of simile shows the Anglo-Saxons to have been accustomed to figurative thought, and this gives some justification to the belief that much of what might appear realistic in their poems was capable of figurative interpretation,' E. G. Stanley, 'Old English Poetic Diction and the Interpretation of The Wanderer, The Seafarer and The Penitent's Prayer,' Anglia, 73, No. 4 (1955), 413-66, rpt. in Essential Articles for the Study of Old English Poetry, ed. Jess B. Bessinger, Jr, and Stanley J. Kahrl (Hamden, Conn.: Archon, 1968), p. 459.

In terms of Hester's and Stanford's definitions of metaphor, when taken together (see above, pp. 43 and 48 respectively), it is possible for a poetic metaphor to have operating as its vehicle a whole set of images, provided that they are concrete and homogeneous and form an intrinsic unity. A. C. Spearing's injunction reinforces the point: 'the modern critic, to be fair to the [mediaeval] poem, must try to consider long passages as wholes, and not always expect to find the effect of the whole present locally.'¹²⁰ The idea of large poetic structures is by no means unnatural to Anglo-Saxon poetry. Curschmann suggests, for example, that 'our evaluation of individual achievement and meaning should concentrate on the use of units larger than single words or phrases.'¹²¹ The fitt, in fact, as The Heliand demonstrates, can be used by a poet to organise his material externally as well as internally.¹²² The actual syntactic relationship between the sea passage and the rest of the poem has little to do with its metaphoric meaning. Going to the other extreme, one can see that the essential principle of the kenning is very similar, only on a much smaller scale, of course: 'It is a question of content, not grammatical form. . . . the linking element need not have any direct grammatical relationship to its base at all. It may be even a remote part of the broader context.'¹²³ A metaphoric

¹²⁰ Criticism and Medieval Poetry, p. 18.

¹²¹ 'Oral Poetry in Mediaeval English, French, and German Literature: Some Notes on Recent Research,' p. 40.

¹²² Ibid., p. 50. Klaeber (Beowulf and The Fight at Finnsburg, pp. c-ci) and Dobbie (ASPR, IV, xxiv-vi) have noticed the deliberate divisions in Beowulf, for instance. But see E. Carrigan, 'Structure and Thematic Development in Beowulf,' Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy, 66, Sec. C, No. 1 (Nov. 1967), 4, esp. n. 15.

¹²³ Thomas Gardner, 'The Application of the Term "Kenning,"' Neophil, 56, No. 4 (1972), 467. Cf. Christine Brooke-Rose, A Grammar of Metaphor (London: Secker & Warburg, 1958), p. 149.

sea-passage, then, is a set or an accumulation of marine or maritime images, which represent a single realm of experience, that can express in terms of the sea something central to a poem's total meaning.

It is a basic assumption of the present study that the figurative dimension of a metaphoric sea-passage varies as the poem's thematic emphasis varies; that is, that the dominant theme determines the way in which the sea is figured. If the sea passage as vehicle has a spiritual significance, the metaphor will contain in its structure the spiritual intention of the poem. Moreover, since in poetry the relevant sense of a metaphor is the way its vehicle and tenor are related by the images they generate, the meaning of the metaphoric sea-passage can then be analysed in relation to the poem's total imagistic structure. Thus, by tracing a dominant idea from the outset of a poem, one can tentatively establish the kind of marine figuration occurring within the context of a particular poem.

A metaphoric sea-passage's immediate context is, of course, the local words which control and shape its imagery. But the poem itself is its indigenous context, since the network of relation which a metaphor establishes between the poem's concepts is essential to the creation of the poem's total meaning. Thus, when a metaphoric sea-passage is encountered in a poem, it is necessary to scrutinise not only the immediate context--the lines in which the passage is lodged--but the larger context of the poem as well: the poetry of its words and the poetry of its theme. In this way, the poem achieves its profundity by means of the metaphoric transfers within its theme. Moreover, the intentional or imagistic pattern of the poem's metaphoric sea-passages is the figurative realisation of its thematic progression; and from the relation created between the two

emerges the complex meaning of the poem. It seems reasonable, therefore, to generalise that in a good poem it is not only descriptive detail and connotations (natural and positional) that control the meaning of a metaphoric sea-passage, but thematic intention as well.

A poem's thematic intention, i.e., its main direction of interest, implies a deliberate and disciplined configuration of images. In fact, a theme itself involves a degree of limitation, inasmuch as his theme defines the legitimate range of imagery for a poet working within a specific cultural context. Thus, a theme may be regarded, on the one hand, as an element of narrative structure and, on the other, as an embodiment of zeitgeist, i.e., an element of 'the inner structure of psychological, social, or philosophical theory of why men behave as they do' (Wellek and Warren, pp. 217-18). The detailed correlation of both these notions of a theme to a particular Anglo-Saxon poem thus enables us to interpret the sea's metaphoric and symbolic dimensions within a poem according to the sea's thematic contexts, both intrinsic and extrinsic.

A metaphoric sea-passage is a symbolic form which helps to communicate the poet's peculiar poetic vision of his world. Any analogy, therefore, that might be explored between the various configurations of a poem's sea passages is admissible if it enlarges our perception of that vision, and if the poem's individuality as language and insight comes more sharply into focus. Such an analogy might then more appropriately be called a thematic metaphor (in the full sense of that word), i.e., a metaphor that gives a name to the contextual connection between the various metaphoric sea-passages. The thematic metaphor is the analogy common to most, if not all, of these passages which make up the thematic structure of the poem; it

is the characteristic analogy of which they are individual thematic expressions; it coalesces the images and unifies the thematic structure of the poem.

In each of the titles of the following chapters, the sea has been characterised thematically according to its metaphoric role within the individual poems. These five poems have been selected primarily for their sea passages. But they also provide a variety of genre. Both The Wanderer and The Seafarer are lyric, elegiac, and homiletic; Exodus is narrative, vernacular handling of Biblical material; Andreas is hagiographic, heroic, and overtly Christian; and Beowulf is epic, heroic, and overtly pagan. Alternatively, this representative variety might be illustrated by roughly assigning these poems to categories of metaphor according to the structure of their marine figuration.¹²⁴ The Wanderer might then be considered an analogical poem in which the sea is related to human life as Wyrd is related to heroic life. The Seafarer, in turn, might be regarded as a literal poem in the sense that it expresses a complex idea of human immortality by juxtaposing images of the sea and the belief in eternal values with no formal predicate of any kind connecting the two. Exodus might be viewed as an archetypal poem, since it unites two individual sets of images, each of which is a specific representative of its own class or genus: the sea of the Israelites' exodus and the sea of the Flood are identified with different things--the one with evil, the other with holiness--but both stand for all poetic seas. According to this system of classification, Andreas might be called a descriptive poem, because in it we have the unambiguous double perspective of the sea passages themselves as well as the

¹²⁴ Northrop Frye, Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays (1957; Princeton, N. J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1971), pp. 123-25.

gospel of which the sea passages are the rhetorical expression.

Finally, Beowulf is anagoric, i.e., every sea experience in it is potentially identical with every experience of the poem's hero.

The ideal of the Germanic king is identified with Beowulf who personifies the sea that brings life and takes it, a force that flows eternally through the universe, creating, sustaining, and protecting generations of mankind. From these poems, I submit, we can gain a fair idea of the metaphoric use of the sea in Anglo-Saxon poetry.

But the selection of these poems has yet another distinction, in that they represent the four main codices containing the extant corpus of Anglo-Saxon poetry. And this raises an interesting imperative for future study, namely, the use of an individual codex as the indigenous and main informing verbal context of the metaphoric structures contained within it. For instance, it may be significant that the fitts in the first book of MS. Junius 11 are numbered consecutively throughout (ASPR, I, xix); not as one long poem, but nevertheless as one long context of discourse. Similarly, Bishop Leófric's mycel englisc boc, too, which is be gehwílcum þingum on leoðwisan geworht (ASPR, III, ix) arguably implies a critical and aesthetic selection. The most important enterprise beckoning critics today is to assess how the metaphoric patterning of Anglo-Saxon poetry perpetually renews itself and explores themes with universal meaning.¹²⁵ If so, then critics need perhaps to

¹²⁵ In his delightful but inaccurate book, The Guest-Hall of Eden: Four Essays on the Design of Old English Poetry (New Haven and London: Yale Univ. Press, 1972), Alvin A. Lee says that its whole argument is 'an attempt to demonstrate how the extant Old English poetic corpus has as its major function in Anglo-Saxon England the re-creation, in poetic terms, of the biblical vision of human life' (p. 6). But in the process Lee oversimplifies that vision and constructs a circular, closed system of possible 'meanings,' which ignores the unique provenance of each codex. More serious, however, is the question-begging in 're-creation,

concentrate on the elaborately compiled codex in its total individuality, for an entire codex may well provide the most creative context of meaning for the poems it contains.

in poetic terms.' Anglo-Saxon poems are not merely pretty, metrical, and formulaic paraphrases of religious stories, but interpretations of reality in the light of the Christian revelation, and as such they are metaphoric and symbolic criticisms of all human life.

Chapter 2

THE FATAL SEA

THE HEROIC LIFE IN THE WANDERER

The scintillating mass of scholarship and criticism that has issued from the varied academic interest in The Wanderer is sufficient evidence not only of the poem's timeless and universal significance but also of its fascination as an Anglo-Saxon artefact. But if most would agree with the general criticism that the poem 'strikes a very responsive chord to our modern ears' with its 'architectonic beauty' and matching 'deft handling of imagery,'¹ then few have demonstrated that agreement in their individual detailed studies.² The basic problem that immediately faces any critic of the poem is the editorial one of punctuation, the descendant of the interpolation theory.³

¹ Stanley B. Greenfield, A Critical History of Old English Literature (London: Univ. of London Press, 1966), pp. 218, 219.

² For good summaries of the diverse critical interpretations, see Bernard F. Huppé, 'The Wanderer: Theme and Structure,' JEGP, 42, No. 4 (1943), 516-38; Thomas C. Rumble, 'From Eardstapa to Snottor on mode: The Structural Principle of "The Wanderer,"' MLQ, 19, No. 3 (1958), 225-29; John C. Pope, 'Dramatic Voices in The Wanderer and The Seafarer,' in Franciplegius: Medieval and Linguistic Studies in Honor of Francis Peabody Magoun, Jr., ed. Jess B. Bessinger, Jr. and Robert P. Creed (New York: New York Univ. Press, 1965), pp. 164-73; and Neil D. Isaacs, 'Association and Guilt: Motive and Structure in The Wanderer,' in Structural Principles in Old English Poetry, by Neil D. Isaacs (Knoxville: Univ. of Tennessee Press, 1968), pp. 35-55.

³ William Witherle Lawrence, in 'The Wanderer and the Seafarer,' JEGP, 4, No. 4 (1902), 460-80, succeeded in 'vindicating the transmitted versions' (p. 480) by decently disposing of R. C. Boer's interpolations which the latter contended in his 'Wanderer und Seefahrer,' Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie, 35 (1902), 1-28.

It is a question of fitting the speeches in the poem to the various perspectives. The number of textual combinations has been multiplied to such an extent over the years that the textual assumptions on which the following interpretation is based had better be set out at the start.⁴

It is assumed here that there are three separate voices, viz., the poet's and those of the two quoted speakers, the eardstapa and the snottor, both of whom are neither imaginary nor surrogate personae but dramatic characters. Admittedly, assigning these speakers their

⁴ The orthodox (and probably most notable) modern arrangement of the poem's lines is that of Greenfield's in his 'The Wanderer: A Reconsideration of Theme and Structure,' JEGP, 50, No. 4 (1951), 451-65, viz., a prologue (1a-7b), a dramatic monologue spoken by the eardstapa (8a-110b), and an epilogue (111a-15b). R. M. Lumiansky would add the first five and the last three lines of the poem to the central soliloquy, assigning to the poet the stage-directions in 6a-7b and 111 ('The Dramatic Structure of the Old English Wanderer,' Neophil, 34 No. 1, 1950, 104-12). Lumiansky's view is approved by Rumble (p. 227) and by T. P. Dunning and A. J. Bliss, eds, The Wanderer, Methuen's Old English Library (London: Methuen, 1969), p. 80, n. 1. P. L. Henry, The Early English and Celtic Lyric (London: Allen & Unwin, 1966), would go so far as to include 5b in the eardstapa's speech (p. 169). Krapp-Dobbie, on the other hand, attribute to the eardstapa only 8a-29a and 92a-110b (ASPR, III, xxxix and 134-37). The eardstapa receives even fewer lines in the dialogue theories. Huppé's distribution of 8a-62a to the eardstapa and 92a-110b to the snottor has been shown to be confused and untenable by Greenfield's reconsideration (op. cit.). But E. G. Stanley's didactic ethopoeia ('Old English Poetic Diction and the Interpretation of The Wanderer, The Seafarer and The Penitent's Prayer,' Anglia, 73, No. 4, 1955, 413-66, rpt. in Essential Articles for the Study of Old English Poetry, ed. Jess B. Bessinger, Jr, and Stanley J. Kahrl, Hamden, Conn.: Archon, 1968, pp. 499-503) and Pope's dramatic dialogue (1a-5b, 8a-57b and 58a-110b) are far more convincing. Finally, whereas Isaacs cavalierly eliminates all 'the apparent contradictions of speakers and speeches by putting the whole poem in the mouth of a poet-persona' (p. 55), A. A. Prins, 'The Wanderer (and the Seafarer),' Neophil, 48, No. 3 (1964), 237-51, resorts to a highly subjective shuffling of the MS folios in order to eliminate 64a-65a. My own arrangement consists most with Pope's proposal, except that mine limits the characters' speeches to seven and four lines respectively. Emily Doris Grubl, in her Studien zu den angelsächsischen Elegien (Marburg: Elwert-Gräfe & Unzer, 1948), pp. 15 ff., also assigns the concluding four lines to the snottor (Pope, p. 188, n. 6).

respective lines is a fairly arbitrary operation. But in view of the scholarly uncertainty, the critic is forced to devise, with appropriate caution, the optimum text which will give him most help in documenting his literary responses and judgements. The assumption is here made that the poet himself speaks in his own voice in all but ll. 8a-14b and ll. 112a-15b. This division has structural and thematic recommendations: it recognises the parallel introduction of two dramatic speeches in the phrase Swa cwæð (6a and 111a),⁵ and it shows the poet continuing in l. 15a the idea of wyrd that he has just installed in l. 5b.⁶

⁵ For arguments for this prospective reference of the phrase, see Dunning-Bliss, pp. 30-36. All textual quotations are from their ed. The alliteration on minne (19b) seems to emphasise the fact that it is the poet who is again speaking. Cf. Stanley B. Greenfield, 'Min, Sylf, and "Dramatic Voices in The Wanderer and The Seafarer,"' JEGP, 68, No. 2 (1969), 216.

⁶ Wyrd occurs four times in the poem, with various meanings. My own readings are: 'Fate' (5b), 'fate/lot' (15b), 'fate' (100b), i.e., death in battle (cf. Exodus 456a), and 'destiny' (107a). B. J. Timmer, 'Wyrd in Anglo-Saxon Prose and Poetry,' Neophil, 26, No. 3 (1941), 213-28, states that 'wyrd is not used in a pre-Christian sense in the Wanderer' (p. 222). The Dunning-Bliss glossary follows Timmer, giving respectively: 'man's lot'; 'course of events'; 'destiny'; and 'ordered course of events' (p. 140). But this seems too restrictive. I agree with Greenfield, 'The Wanderer: A Reconsideration . . . , p. 459, that Wyrd is presented at times as a destructive agent in the poem (e.g., 78a-87b). This is not to take Wyrd to mean a pagan deity: 'it [is] a poetic term, often personified, for what is a timeless concept, pagan only in its associations, the concept of inescapable event' (I. L. Gordon, 'Traditional Themes in The Wanderer and The Seafarer,' RES, 5, No. 17, 1954, 5). And there is, of course, no conflict between Wyrd and God, only between Wyrd and man. Greenfield continues: 'Although the Christian God is mentioned here--and not his mercy--his role is not particularly Christian. Wyrd performs the same function attributed to the Creator of men in these lines (cf. 107) and could be substituted for ælda Scyppend with no appreciable change in the meaning of the passage' (loc. cit.). Cf. Henry, p. 165. More recently, Alvin A. Lee, in his The Guest-Hall of Eden: Four Essays on the Design of Old English Poetry (New Haven and London: Yale Univ. Press, 1972), recognises that the eardstapa is 'a study of a man, whether through individual sin or simply through the working of an inexorable and malevolent wyrd, apart from God's grace' (p. 140). The question of

In this reading of the text, then, we are given three not entirely distinct experiences. Lines 8a-14b characterise the loneliness and grief of a lordless survivor of battle; lines 112a-15b characterise the patience and insight of a wise man. The first speech represents the poet's former state of mind, while the second his present state of mind. The first half of the poem is the imaginative re-creation of the very real and personal anguish of the poet's spiritual realisation; the second half of the poem is a demonstration of the causes and remedy of that anguish. As Leslie says, the poet's 'troubles are over and done with.'⁷ In other words, from the detached position of Christian wisdom achieved, the poet demonstrates the process of that achievement in order to edify his audience. It is in this sense that 'the progress of the poem is best explained in terms of a consolatio.'⁸ The consolation is completed simultaneously with the conclusion of the poem. The suffering in the poem is part of Wyrð, the course of which the poetry re-enacts from the opening lines until the poem comes to an end: 'To understand

the poem's pagan-Christian syncretism may be followed through Timmer's articles, op. cit. and 'Heathen and Christian Elements in Old English Poetry,' Neophil, 29, No. 3 (1944), 180-85; G. V. Smithers's articles, 'The Meaning of The Seafarer and The Wanderer,' MAE, 26, No. 3 (1957), 137-53; 28, No. 1 (1959), 1-22; ' . . . Appendix,' No. 2 (1959), 99-104; R. W. V. Elliott's 'The Wanderer's Conscience,' ES, 39, No. 5 (1958), 193-200; and Dunning-Bliss's introductory sec., 'The Wanderer and Heroic Tradition,' pp. 94-102.

⁷ R. F. Leslie, ed., The Wanderer (Manchester: Manchester Univ. Press, 1966), p. 4. Rumble sees the first 105 lines of the poem as the purely imaginary dream-experience of 'a warrior who, sitting apart from his comrades, meditates philosophically upon the inevitable destiny of old age and death' (p. 229).

⁸ J. E. Cross, 'On the Genre of The Wanderer,' Neophil, 45, No. 1 (1961), 71. B. J. Timmer emphasises the didactic quality of the poem in 'The Elegiac Mood in Old English Poetry,' ES, 24, No. 2 (1942), 33-44.

the poem is to understand the progress of the soul from that beginning to that conclusion; the process by which the soul attains to consolation and security.⁹

The poem's generic structure thus matches the periodic structure of its central theme,¹⁰ which has its origins in the suggestive patterns of imagery. It has already been pointed out that one of the major patterns of imagery in The Wanderer centres on the mind.¹¹ Perhaps this prominence of mental phenomena such as memory, dream, and hallucination, of which Leslie speaks (p. 8), accounts for some of the difficulty that critics have had in clarifying the poem's total organisation. Indeed, the imagistic structure of the poem is a complex one, and it will be well, therefore, to describe the relation between theme and imagery by tracing the significant development of a single idea within the poem's total pattern of imagery.

In the first half-line of The Wanderer there is the notion of

⁹ James F. Doubleday, 'The Three Faculties of the Soul in The Wanderer,' Neophil, 53, No. 2 (1969), 189.

¹⁰ The earth-heaven duality which the poem holds before our attention has been viewed in several different ways: the 'contrast between earthly insecurity and heavenly security' (Huppé, p. 526); 'the inexorability of Fate and the this-worldly conduct and wisdom which man learns in the course of his many encounters with Wyrd' (Greenfield, 'The Wanderer: A Reconsideration . . .', p. 464); the contrast between the security of heaven and the mutability of the world, but stressing the misery and mutability (Stanley, p. 499); 'the failure of this world to provide consolation. . . . the whole problem of the transitoriness of all things' (Leslie, p. 23); and 'the transience of all earthly values' (Greenfield, The Interpretation of Old English Poems, London and Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972, p. 120).

¹¹ James L. Rosier, 'The Literal-Figurative Identity of The Wanderer,' PMLA, 79, No. 4 (1964), 366, n. 2: 'In the 115 lines there are some thirty-five occurrences of [psychological] words.' Dunning-Bliss might add to Rosier's list myne (27b) and warað (32a).

not mere isolation but quarantine or solitary confinement (anhaga).¹²

Several lines later the idea is echoed in the contrastive sequence ana . . . nan (8a-9b). Then, in one of the important thematic sequences in the poem, the idea occurs several times:

'Ic to soþe wat
 þæt biþ in eorle indryhten þeaw
 þæt he his ferðlocan fæste binde,
 healde his hordcofan, hycge swa he wille.'
 Ne mæg werig mod wyrde wilstondan,
 ne se hreo hyge helpe gefremman:
 forðon domgeorne dreorigne oft
 in hyra breostcofan bindað fæste,
 swa ic modsefan minne sceolde
 (oft earmcearig, eðle biðæled,
 freomægum feor) feterum sælan,
 siþþan geara iu goldwine minne
 hrusan heolstre biwrah (11b-23a)

The idea of containment, which in the opening line of the poem has only a vague, general meaning of 'someone enclosed and alone thinking,' and which is then modified to mean 'bereaved' (i.e., surrounded by death and sorrow), is now further refined and related to a more specific solitude: the seclusion of the downcast mind and the enshrinement of precious but painful memories. The mental containment symbolised by ferðlocan, hordcofan, and breostcofan is associated with manly reticence in the face of tribulation and with the honourable adherence to a code of heroic morality (indryhten þeaw). These addi-

¹² Dunning-Bliss, p. 38. Using a highly sophisticated principle ('with jargon to match,' Isaacs, p. 47) of 'generative composition,' Rosier also details the presence of the idea of 'fastness.' But his conclusions differ from mine. I fail to see how 'In the paradox of his existence, the wanderer is protected by malignant exile' and 'comforted by the ice-fettered winter of his mind' (pp. 367-68). The paradox exists in Rosier's mind, not in the poem. Nowhere does the poem imply that the eardstapa's state is one of protection and comfort. Lee is correct when he says that it is a spiritual state of almost unrelieved hellish bondage, tragedy, and misery (pp. 138-41). Edward B. Irving, Jr, 'Image and Meaning in the Elegies,' in Old English Poetry: Fifteen Essays, ed. Robert P. Creed (Providence, R. I.: Brown Univ. Press, 1967), pp. 153-66, also notices images of binding and sees a deliberate contrast between them and images of expansion, e.g., 'the word geond as a preposition and as verbal prefix' (p. 160).

tional connotations will inform each recurrence of the idea. The idea occurs again immediately after the above passage, where it has two new referends--the sea and the hall--giving greater meaning to the retainer's heroic motivation to break out of his dejection in a search for the joy he once knew:

 ond ic hean þonan
wod wintercearig ofer wapema gebind,
sohte seledreorig sinces bryttan
 (23b-25b)

A little further on we get another expression of mental containment:

'Ðonne sorg ond slæp somod ætgedre/ earmne anhogan oft gebindað'

(39a-40b). In all but the sea:hall excerpt, there is a suggestion in the imagery of the desire to preserve the past silently, to detain time and arrest its further passing, to achieve a stillness in the reality of life-moving-towards-death.

By outlining the imagistic development of a single idea in this way, we have been able to interpret not one but several images in the poem, and certain themes appear. First, there is the theme of the passing of the hall. Through juxtaposition, and working like an exemplum, the eardstapa-lines suggest that the poet, too, experienced the loss of all meaning in his life when his lord and comrades died. Yet, at another level, the poet implies that he actually wanted to live bound by heroic standards even though his lord was dead; he wanted to honour his retainership. In the poet's mind, his pledge transcended the death of his lord. Then, there is the related theme of the passing of the world. In the second part of the poem, for instance, the depressing evacuation of the hall by 'spirited' (modge) retainers is closely associated with the gradual exhaustion of middangeard (62). The world is in its sixth age, which extends from the time of Christ until the Day of Judgement and in which all things weaken and decay:

we ne sceolan lufian worlde gliengas to swiþe ne þysne
middangeard; forþon þe þeos world is eall forwordenlic
& gedrofenlic & gebrosnodlic & feallendlic, & þeos
world is eall gewiten. . . . Hwæt we on þam gecnawan
magon þæt þeos world is scyndende & heononweard. 13

The ruins of halls (75a-87b) symbolise not only the poet's despair but also universal terrestrial destruction. The ruined walls represent the ruinous world of this life, the mutability of human achievement and the transience of all earthly things.¹⁴

Although there is no predominating, explicitly delineated seascape in The Wanderer, the marine images that are present are by no means thematically inert.¹⁵ For instance, the subtlety of the poet's artistic use of the sea is fully represented in the opening lines:

OFT him anhaga are gebideð,
Metudes miltse, þeah þe he modcearig
geond lagulade longe sceolde
hreran mid hondum hrimcealde sæ,
wadan wræclastas: Wyrd bið ful aed!

The poet speaks from personal experience when he describes the occupation of the anhaga, a man whose singleness of mind prevents him from all activities other than the one in which he are gebideð. The two possible transitive meanings of gebidan, 'to wait for' and 'to experience,' need not be mutually exclusive. Good poetry does

¹³ The Blickling Homilies of the Tenth Century, ed. R. Morris EETS, OS 73 (London: Trübner, 1880), No. 10, p. 115. Cf. 'Seo syxte yld, þe nu is, hyre geendung ys swyðe ungewis, ac hyre yld sceal forealdian 7 mid worulde ende beon geendod,' Byrhtferth's Manual (A.D. 1011), ed. S. J. Crawford, EETS, OS 177 (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1929), p. 238.

¹⁴ For a lively discussion of the gradual physical deterioration of man, see J. E. Cross, 'Aspects of Microcosm and Macrocosm in Old English Literature,' in Studies in Old English Literature in Honor of Arthur G. Brodeur, ed. Stanley B. Greenfield (Eugene, Ore.: Univ. of Oregon Press, 1963), pp. 1-22. See also below, Ch. 3, p. 103.

¹⁵ E.g., sælan (21b) usually means 'to moor up (a ship)' (Rosier, p. 367, n. 6).

more than one thing at a time. Removing the first comma in the above extract, we may read are as an adverb:¹⁶ 'waits for/experiences with dignity the Maker's kindness.' Again, replacing the comma and regarding Metudes miltse as a variation of are, we may read the phrase as: 'waits for/experiences grace, the mercy of God.' The anhaga is not distracted from his meditation by thoughts of his own suffering, and is rewarded with moments of comfort, OFT balancing longe. He is not so depressed that he despairs of relief.

The marine image that the poet uses to specify his hardship has led some critics to read into the text the existence of a boat or ship.¹⁷ The greater probability, however, must be that, if he meant us to understand a boat, the poet would have mentioned it more directly in a passage of such vivid particularisation. There exists to my knowledge no other Anglo-Saxon poem in which a boat is referred to only in this oblique way, i.e., by describing not the boat itself but merely an action which can be associated with it. A figurative interpretation of the whole image, on the other hand, makes such an importation gratuitous if not irrelevant. Ironically, it is the critic who sees an actual boat in hreran mid hondum who has to construe the phrase metaphorically as a synecdochal description of a voyage. At the other extreme, Stanley argues that the whole winter seascape merely symbolises the poet's state of mind (pp. 478-80). My own position is that the whole image of these lines is a metaphoric vehicle dramatising the poet's mental depression by emphasising the passivity inherent in every human action.

¹⁶ Dunning-Bliss, pp. 41-42. Cf. 'Pær he freondlice/ on his agenum fæder are ne wolde/ gesceawian' (Genesis, ASPR, I, 1579b-81a).

¹⁷ E.g., Dunning-Bliss, p. 105, n. 4.

The poetic emphasis in the passage is on the agony of human experience (hreran and wadan) and existence (sceolde), temporal (longe) as well as spatial (geond), and the patient anhaga lives a life that has been destined to be a period of physical hardship and spiritual distress. God is seen as Creator and Judge whose existence offers the hope of relief from the bleak and bitter desolation of life and the ceaseless operation of Wyrð. Having been divinely 'decreed' (ful ared), Wyrð is beyond recall. The poet can face the reality of this fact only because he has gained the wisdom that human life (wreclastas) was created with the same breath that 'uttered' Wyrð. This equivalence is strongly suggested by the metrical collocation of the two nouns in the line. At the same time, that Wyrð is also an antagonistic force in a man's life is expressed by the definite syntactic division between the two half-lines, as well as by the auxiliary infinitive wadan, 'to advance with difficulty and with special effort' (Dunning-Bliss, p. 68), suggesting continuous struggle, as opposed to the past participle ared, which enacts the finality of God's decisive will. The ironic duality of tone and meaning is perhaps accentuated by the almost imperceptible aural echo of are in MS ared (albeit differently stressed), which activates relevant paronomasia: Wyrð has already been fully 'hallowed' by divine sanction, whereas man must wait for God's favour; again, taking bið in its future sense, the lines may refer to the sentence passed on mankind of a life of hardship, when God expelled Adam from Paradise, and the divine fiat must first run its course, be fully 'honoured' before men can receive mercy.¹⁸ The close relationship

¹⁸ Lee also associates the anhaga with Adam, but is surely mesmerised by his own theory when he says that Adam (in Genesis B) saw that 'he must now become a wanderer in a wasteland and a seafarer through stormy seas' (p. 137).

between God's mercy and man's suffering is further intimated by the alliterative link in the second line and by the parallel metrical pattern in 2a and 4a, which are both Type A. The anhaga, whose vision of human life is only partial, nevertheless sees enough of the agony to make him expect only mercy from a Judge who sees all of man's suffering. The coherence and textural richness of these lines enable us to appreciate the sea image as a metaphoric vehicle used to compound such affined elements of experience as the painful plight of being stranded in an icy sea (whether paddling a boat or treading water) and the spiritual insight into man's lot in a creation where to live fully is to know the need of help from the Creator.

But the major sea-passage in the poem (23b-57b) has a more important thematic function. To begin with, a distinction must be made in this passage between at least two levels of experience, one of conception and one of perception (Rosier, p. 366). The poet's phantasies constitute a subsidiary realistic context, for within the phantasies themselves 'there are objective landscapes even though these must ultimately melt into thin air.'¹⁹ In his memory (gemynd, 51a), the poet sees his former hall-life in terms of the metaphoric seascape (swimmað, 53b; fleotendra, 54a²⁰), while the metaphoric seascape itself is qualified vice versa by the conceptualised hall-life. Of course, only the mental act of remembering is on the

¹⁹ Daniel G. Calder, 'Setting and Mode in The Seafarer and The Wanderer,' NM, 72, No. 2 (1971), 271.

²⁰ Cf. W. J. B. Owen, 'Wanderer, Lines 50-57,' MLN, 65, No. 3 (1950), 161-65. See, too, Greenfield's repugning against the expedient subjectivity in Dunning-Bliss's editorial principle ('literary considerations must outweigh linguistic arguments'): 'they would deny the possibility of unique figurative meanings for these [two] words' (rev. of The Wanderer, N&Q, 215, No. 3, 1970, 115).

'real' level of the poem, forming part of the poet's narration of his search for a lord and companionship. On the first figurative level, the seascape is the vehicle of remembered hall-life and, on the second level, the hall-life itself has become part of that vehicle. Seascape and hall-life are mutually affective, and together these two metaphoric vehicles communicate the painful joy of remembered happiness. Relating them to the context of the whole poem is more straightforward than at first appears, for both not only qualify and reinforce a common theme but also participate in a larger metaphoric structure.

This larger structure emerges in the phantasmagoric sequence:

Donne sorg ond slāp	somod atgædre	
earmne anhogan	oft gebindað,	40
þinceð him on mode	þæt he his mondryhten	
clyppe ond cysse,	ond on cneo lecge	
honda ond heafod,	swa he hwilum ær	
in geardagum	giefstolas breac:	
Donne onwæcneð eft	wineleas guma,	45
gesihð him biforan	fealwe wægas,	
baþian brimfluglas,	brædan feþra,	
hreosan hrim ond snaw	hagle gemenged.	
Þonne beoð þy hefigran	heortan benne,	
sare æfter swæsne--	sorg bið geniwad--	50
þonne maga gemynd	mod geondhweorfeð,	
greteð gliwstafum,	georne geondsceawað.	
Secga geseldan	swimmað eft onweg,	
fleotendra ferð	no þær fela bringeð	
cudra cwidegleda--	cearo bið geniwad--	55
þam þe sendan sceal	swiþe geneahe	
ofer waþema gebind	werigne sefan.	

The phrase þe sendan sceal 'who must go' is thematically subtle.

What is actually meant by sceal (which receives a full stress in the line) is indicated by the individual actions in the passage of sleeping, embracing, waking, and so on. The notion of necessity expressed by sceal in the poem is realised first in the need to exercise patience and fortitude in time of personal grief and mental depression. The eardstapa (6a) 'homeland-walker' (i.e., a kent heiti for the survivor of a battle in which lord and kinsmen have fallen) poses an ironic

predicament when he implies that, whereas formerly he 'had' (sceolde, 8a) to keep his anxieties to himself, there is now no one alive from whom it is necessary to keep them secret. This kind of restraint is inspired by indryhten beaw as a controlling principle in the life of each warrior. To the survivor and to the poet (as he used to think) the action of binding the mind is associated with moral order. The poet says that he himself had thus to 'fasten' his mind (19a-23a) but soon felt the need to seek another hall. Thus, in order to abide by 'noble custom,' a warrior must contain his grief within his mind, at least until the grief has been replaced by the consolation of joy in the hall once more.

But such another hall is an elusive reality, and the search is a lonely one of sorrow and silence (sorg to geferan, 30b). The warrior who no longer has the guidance of a lord becomes isolated and adrift in the world, and his life is reduced to two states, sorg and slæp. He projects himself into the past in an attempt to relive the love of his lord, but it is a futile experience for the simple reason that his sleep has to end. (Onwæcneð, though a verb in the first half-line, receives a full stress and initiates the alliteration.) As conception, the dream functions to amplify the warrior's sense of loss when he, 'friendless' (wineleas, 45b) and joyless (wyn eal gedreas, 36b), awakes to the perception of the birds and the storm. Since it is meteorologically improbable that three different atmospheric precipitations could occur at once,²¹ we are justified in reading l. 48 as a kind of symbolic periphrasis or objective equivalent of his experience. The image of the harsh, cold weather focuses the warrior's grief and at the same time conveys the idea

²¹ B. K. Martin, 'Aspects of Winter in Latin and Old English Poetry,' JEGP, 68, No. 3 (1969), 378, n. 9.

of death's shocking abruptness (cf. l. 61). His struggle to come to terms with death merely renews his sorrow and anxiety, and, as a last resort, he tries to falsify the reality of death in dreams and delusion, and to negate its existence, not only by not talking about it, but by seeking the lively company of other human beings. But death is 'one of the moments of Wyrð,'²² which is a force serving God's will,²³ and according to which all the little contingencies of natural life are adjusted and arranged. Death will inevitably come again, as must the surface of the sea inevitably be changed from fealwe to gebind.

Terrestrial mutability, which we discussed earlier as a prominent theme in the poem, is thus seen to be 'only one aspect of the divine order of the cosmos' (Payne, p. 84). In the face of a disintegrated social environment and a disrupted way of life, whether through achievement or through catastrophe, one holds fast to the remaining fundamental values on which to re-establish a purpose and meaning in life. But an anhaga's adherence to an indryhten beaw is an unreal state of affairs, inasmuch as such a code of morality implies human society, since, for his life to have its full meaning, a warrior is dependent upon other warriors (including his lord) and their activities (including war). Similarly, the sea is part of the complex system of Nature, and, when it is fluid, certain birds find their

²² Anne Payne, King Alfred & Boethius: An Analysis of the Old English Version of the 'Consolation of Philosophy' (London: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1968), p. 105.

²³ Leslie comments: 'Wyrð appears to have here [5b] the passive sense of man's lot, as suggested by Timmer . . . The poet may also have had in mind Boethius' concept of fatum subject to the dominion of providentia . . . Reconciliation of the intervention of God in lines 1 and 2 with a preordained course of events is thus made easier' (p. 66).

identity in it, but without being conscious of their own definition (46a-47b). Brimfugas could not exist were the waves for ever frozen. A warrior is defined by death as a mortal creature, and the survivor is painfully conscious (sare) of that fact.

It is in this way that the sea becomes integral in the figurative structure of the poem. In crudely analogical terms,²⁴ to say that the sea is the hall of Wyrd is to mean that the frozen waves symbolise an inhuman power; just as to describe an heroic community as a sea of nobility is to point up the transience inherent in hall-joy, for no hall can provide permanent asylum from Wyrd. But the implicit disparities in these analogies are also operative. The ice-bound sea is unlike the hall in its coldness and emptiness, offering no protection from the weather. Again, unlike the hall, the sea can be effortlessly 'rebuilt' as a natural process, while, when a hall is destroyed, it is an 'appalling' (gestlic, 73b) sight, its ruins standing 'abandoned' (weste, 74b).

Irony, then, is in the very texture of the sea:hall metaphor. When seen in the context of the whole poem, this metaphor sustains the larger irony that in crossing the sea, i.e., seeking another hall, the poet was actually pursuing more grief because his goal was not only illusory but transitory as well. As Pope puts it, his 'whole-souled devotion to his lord and his fellows of the comitatus is at once the sign of his nobility and the cause of his sorrow.'²⁵

²⁴ As Rosier says, 'the poem is an exercise in ratiocination, not logical but figurative' (loc. cit.). C. L. Wrenn, in his A Study of Old English Literature (London: Harrap, 1967), also mentions the poem's unity and conscious structure (p. 141).

²⁵ Op. cit., p. 171. Cf. Roger Fowler, 'A Theme in The Wanderer,' MAE, 36, No. 1 (1967), 1-14: 'the recollection of past pleasure makes the impossibility of reattaining it more difficult to bear' (p. 7, n. 8).

In other words, though the poet's anxiety was aggravated by his having to bind his mind, he sought release from this anxiety in the company of those who made it necessary for him to bind up his mind in the first place. This dilemma heightens the discrepancy between the life of men as warriors and the life of men as human beings.

The thematic metaphor of The Wanderer is thus a twofold analogy: the obligatory restraint in time of distress and the human need for solace, which was signified by the changing surface of the sea. We are meant to see all eorla lif (60a) as qualified at once by indryhten beaw and Wyrð areð. These two analogies make up the thematic structure of the poem. As we saw earlier, both aspects of the metaphor are interwoven in the phantasmagoric sequence. A modified recapitulation at this point will further clarify their relation.

Within the immediate context of the wave-imagery, the dream contains the essence of the poem. The sorrow, sleep, and isolation (the warrior's mind is closed) and the binding action of the weather are the images which fuse in the two main meanings of the thematic metaphor. The continuity between being 'sealed' by sleep and waves congealing secures further levels of meaning, prepared for by the wave image that marked the start of the poet's long search for another hall (24). The search is an ultimately vain endeavour: it is like a dream containing other dreams, and like all dreams must end in reality. At the end of the hallucinatory passage, there is in the mind of the poet nothing but the 'binding' process. He finds himself in a spiritual impasse, and he becomes a merely passive factor in Creation, inextricably bound up in the purposes of Wyrð. Collectively, the unreal moments of grief have an inverted poetic value, as has been suggested by the oblique allusions to the ideas of joyous containment (þinceð him on mode and clyppe) and of sorrowful release

(swimmað eft onweg), for they prepare us for the reality of cearo bið geniwað, which it is now clear is meant to be taken to mean both present renewal of anxiety and renewal in the future. The dramatisation of the renewal follows immediately in the image 'hu hi færlice flet ofgeafon' (61), and points to another aspect of the containment image. The observation of the fate of modge magubegnas (62a), who vanish like spectres, leads to the prospect of preserving hall-life and protecting loyal warriors, only to see both hall and friends annihilated in war, 'that ugliest of fates' (wyrd seo mere, 100b).²⁶ This greater realisation of his own humanity belongs to the poet as a wita, and is the insight gained only through patience (65b).

The statements of the survivor and the wise man (8a-14b and 112a-15b, respectively) embody the poet's past and present perspectives, and are related to the rest of the poem by means of the thematic metaphor, for 'binding' is the dominant image in the poem's universe, and is integral in the experience of the poet and the two characters. The lines of the survivor, wretched and anxious, present a warrior's grief over personal loss and his concern about death. In his use of sceolde, the survivor shows that he shares the poet's former sense of heroic morality and noble restraint. Through the thematic metaphor this aspect of heroic life is thus linked with the anxious search for consolation and with the escape from death. Yet, to maintain a noble reticence is one thing; to seek, as the poet did,

²⁶ This phrase depicts the poet's attitude to the whole business of men being killed by men (99a-100a). I take mere in its pejorative sense as in, e.g., the description of Grendel as mere mearcstapa 'the notorious stalker' and se mera (Beowulf, ASPR, IV, 103a and 762a). Dunning-Bliss agree that it does not 'seem probable in the light of the rest of the poem that the poet would look on death in battle as being necessarily glorious' (p. 73).

the comfort of other warriors as the only solace is another matter. And the escape from death betrays an ambivalence towards indryhten þeaw in general for, to be worthy of a lord, a warrior must be prepared to die every moment of his life. The contrasting image of the survivor helps us to interpret better the poet's former predicament as he came to a realisation of his spirituality.

By contrast to both of these, the wise man is neither perturbed (he is snottor) nor restless (he gesæt, 111). In the opening lines of the second part of the poem, appealing to a moral standard different from the heroic one, the poet uses sceal, in the meiotic anaphora of ne to, to express with gnomic emphasis the qualities of the wise man: 'A wise man is never angry,' etc. (66a-69b).²⁷ At the end of the poem, a stoic reticence is still regarded as highly commendable and noble (112a-14a). The wise man, too, exercises an outward restraint (cwæð . . . on mode, 111a) and, like the poet formerly, believes in the hope of solace. Unlike the poet formerly, however, he has succeeded in finding true solace (frofre to Fæder on heofonum, 115a) and, unlike that of the survivor, his present state is a result of a moral choice which took him out of Wyrd's jurisdiction. To sum up, all three characters have an heroic likeness in their coping with grief, but they differ in their attitude to finding solace.

This difference is essentially one of practical approach, and the poem explores three corresponding possibilities. One may accept the grief with passive resignation and allow it to destroy the self, as the survivor does. Or, one may, as the poet did, turn from the

²⁷ Irving interprets this ne to-passage literally as an extension of the theme of binding or restraining (p. 161). F. N. M. Diekstra, 'The Wanderer 65b-72: The Passions of the Mind and the Cardinal Virtues,' Neophil, 55, No. 1 (1971), 73-88, thinks the whole passage actually stresses the moderation implicit in excess (pp. 84-85). For a full discussion of these lines, see Dunning-Bliss, pp. 117-18.

grief and, hoping that it will not reappear elsewhere, try to re-instate one's self as though nothing had happened. But the attempt is either hopeless or unsatisfying because it is based on the false assumption that the experience has left the self unchanged. Or, finally, one may make adjustments which, if they do not eliminate the grief, will at least reduce its subjective significance: for instance, one can appreciate it more realistically in the contemplation of other people's agony. This is the approach of the wise man. He has been able to see his grief as only a small part of the greater grief of the world and, interpreting it as such, he has discovered a new self.

Arising from this latter perspective is a theme that is implicit in the complementary themes, noted earlier, of the passing of the hall and the passing of the world. This third theme is arrived at by interpreting the poet's search as a purely humanistic attempt to regain a pristine happiness (cf. The Seafarer 81b-90b). From this primitivistic reading it is an easy step to the anagogical one of seeing in the hall-less warrior's situation the state of all men through Adam's expulsion from Paradise (Smithers, p. 148). But there the Christian iconicity of the sea-journey ends, and Cross makes a valid point against the construction of a detailed (Robertsonian) allegorical reading:

if The Wanderer is to be interpreted as an allegory, we might reasonably assume that the dead lord was also a type, and the other lord, so desperately sought, should also have an allegorical application. Clearly this leads to absurdity, for a Christian's lord is Christ whose death is not the cause of a Christian's exile in the world, and what Christian would seek another lord if his lord Christ were dead? 28

28 'On the Genre of The Wanderer,' p. 72.

But it is unnecessary to go as far as this, and the poem's thematic metaphor helps us to discern the direction our reading should take.

If the essential meaning of The Wanderer is in fact the passivity inherent in every human action devoid of God's help, then it becomes relevant to see the whole earth as a hall built by God for men to enjoy Him in.²⁹ He is the one true lord of the whole human race. But heroic passion often leads to precipitate deeds, and war is evil because it causes nothing less than strife and suffering within God's hall. The sum-series (80b-84b), a list of the fates of battle-corpses, implies the death of all men, but it should not for that reason be taken as nihilistic pessimism. Such lists are part of traditional Christian apologetics, and are intended to exemplify the efficacy of the resurrection of the body, which will be seen unblemished on the Day of Judgement, no matter how it has been destroyed.³⁰ Thus, what sounds at first like a deeper tone of fatalistic depression in the poem, speaks very loudly of God's redeeming action.

Again, war is a breach of God's law and therefore sin. So He watches over His creation at all times, ready to intervene when chaos threatens:

Ypde swa þisne eardgeard ælda Scyppend
 oppæt, burgwara breahtra lease,
 eald enta geweorc idlu stodon.
 (85a-87b)

Etymologically, Ypde describes the destructive action of the Flood,

²⁹ Lee's approach endorses this conclusion, calling the idea 'a firmly established Old English poetic image for God's earthly Creation' (p. 142).

³⁰ J. E. Cross, 'On The Wanderer Lines 80-84: A Study of a Figure and a Theme,' Vetenskaps-Societetens 1 Lund Årsbok, 1958-59, 77-110.

and the accompanying reference to giants seems to support this reading.³¹ The point of the contrast with the preceding lines is immediately clear: God's power is beyond men's imagining, and not even war can compare with His terrible wrath. He made them and He can destroy them however mighty they may be. These lines suggest further that God not only sweeps away human debris but also, according to His justice, cleanses the world of sin. As Cross demonstrates, the Hwær cwom-passage (92a-93b) derives from the ubi sunt-passages found in many Latin homiletic works and transmitted in Anglo-Saxon sermons (Dunning-Bliss, p. 121, n. 92-3). Thus the tone of this section of the poem is clearly admonitory. In spite of a man's suffering on earth, he can expect punishment if he is impious and proud.

A very important corollary follows from these notions of divine power and potentiality. Since the operation of Wyrd, which can be neither altered nor avoided, is the chief way in which the Creator works His just and holy will, war, the severest Wyrd, can have no lasting effect on the man who lives according to God's will. Yet death in battle is an extreme contingency, and most of the time men have to cope with a less fierce Wyrd. It is what men do in spite of their moral errors that determines their ultimate fate. Thus a man must 'find a way to an experience where Wyrd will not touch him' (Payne, p. 106). Moreover, Wyrd operates only in time, and so the whole significance of the Hwær cwom-passage becomes focused in the lines: 'Hu seo prag gewat, / genap under nihthelm, swa heo no wære.' (95b-96b). In hrusan bindeð (102b), there is an echo of the containment metaphor, and the winter weather is now symbolic of mortal distress: the kinesis of time obliterates everything human, and every

³¹ See John Burrow, "'The Wanderer': Lines 73-87," N&Q, 210, No. 5 (1965), 166-68, and P. J. Frankis, 'The thematic significance of enta geweorc and related imagery in The Wanderer,' Anglo-Saxon England, 2 (1973), 253-69.

man must return to the earth.

The major themes in the poem now converge towards an essentially homiletic climax, in which all heroic values are seen to be transitory and therefore vain (97a-105b).³² It is the ironic reality of death itself that is the ultimate passivity inherent in all human life, for Wyrd transforms the earth, which is innately laene (106a-10b).

Gregory expresses the idea in an apposite metaphor:

Militia ergo est vita hominis super terram, quia
et, sicut superius diximus, unusquisque dum quo-
tidie ad vitae terminum per temporum augmenta
tendit, augendo vitam, vivere desinit. 33

To the monastic Anglo-Saxon audience the reference to the evanescence of earthly time would very probably have suggested the patristic concept of human temporality. When Adam lived in Paradise, the destructive force of Wyrd did not exist, for he was not within the flow of time. He was 'stationary.' But after he broke his trust by disobeying 'Him who is ever stationary,'

coepit ire cum tempore. Statu videlicet immortalitatis amisso, cursus eum mortalitatis absorbit.
... [Et] quia ex illo originem ducimus, ejus cursum nascendo sortimur, ut eo ipso quotidiano momento quo vivimus incessanter a vita transeamus, et vivendi

³² Similarly, Leslie says: 'The best of the heroic virtues are insufficient' (p. 25). Cf. Dunning-Bliss, p. 101, 2nd par., and Fowler's conclusion that the poet is actually 'using conventional Christian forms to lament the death of the Germanic past' (p. 14).

³³ And so, the life of man is a warfare upon earth, in that, as we have said above, each one of us, while by the accessions of time he is daily advancing to the end of life, in adding to his life, is making an end to li[f]e.

Moralium Libri, Bk 8.6.11, PL 75.807D; trans. [James Bliss], Morals on the Book of Job, A Library of Fathers, No. 18, I (Oxford: Parker, 1844), 422.

nobis spatium unde crescere creditur, inde decrescat. 34

The whole earth, then, is a kingdom made 'precarious' (earfoðlic, 106a) by death, Adam's curse (wyrda gesceaft, 107a). The wise man is he knows that his only worldly wealth is his allotted lifespan, his share of time (wintra ðeal, 65a) which, paradoxically, daily diminishes. But there is actually little inherent passivity in the wise man's actions because, firstly, he acts in the knowledge of as many contingencies as he can humanly be aware of and, secondly, he raises his mind towards the 'hean hrofes þæs hehstan andgites, þæt [he] mæge hrædlicost cumon 7 eðelicost to [his] agenre cyððe þonan þe [he] ær come.'³⁵ That is, seeking God's comfort, the wise man strives to align his life with God's will.

Even more closely analogous is the idea found in Boethius, though it could have originated elsewhere, of a refuge from fatal motion,

34 he began to pass onward together with time. Having lost, namely, the stability of an immortal condition, the stream of mortal being engulfed him. . . . [And] because we derive our origin from him, we inherit his course of life, at our birth, so that every moment of every day that we live, we are constantly passing away from life, and the length of our life decreases by the very means by which it is believed to increase.

Ibid., Bk 25.3.4, PL 76.321C-D; trans. Bliss, Morals on the Book of Job, A Library of Fathers, No. 23, III (Oxford: Parker, 1847), 96.

35 King Alfred's Old English Version of Boethius, Ch. 41.5, ed. Walter John Sedgefield (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1899), p. 146, ll. 27-29, contraction expanded. See, too, Gregory's Moralium Libri Bk 8.13.28, esp. 'cumque soliditatem perennitatis non considerant, exsilium patriam, tenebras lumen, cursum stationem putant' ('and whereas they take no thought of the sure ste[a]dfastness of the everlasting state, they take their exile for their home, darkness for light, going for standing,' PL 75.817D; Bliss, I, 435).

namely, that

tanto aliquid fato liberum est quanto illum rerum
cardinem vicinius petit; quodsi supernae mentis
haeserit firmitati, motu carens fati quoque super-
greditur necessitatem. 36

If this is the theory, Alfred translates it into practical terms:

'swa hi hiora lufe near Gode lætað, 7 swiðor þas eorðlicon þing for-
sioð, swa hi beoð orsorgnan, 7 læs reccað hu sio wyrd wandrige, oððe
hwæt hio brenge.³⁷ Thus, in a sense, the wise man, too, 'clasps
and kisses' his lord, and the location of sundor æt rune (111b) now
becomes clear: the wise man is an anhaga 'at the still point of the
turning world' where, having endured his tribulation, he 'experiences
reverently God's grace' (are gebideð, / Metudes miltse), i.e., spiri-
tual enrichment in moments of mystical illumination. On the other
hand, in such moments of insight into experience, the horror of the
emptiness of human existence would be scarcely endurable were not
the insight contained (limited) by time:

Ongietan sceal gleaw hæle hu gæstlic bið,
þonne ealre þisse worulde wela weste stondeð,
swa nu missenlice geond þisne middangeard,
winde biwaune, weallas stondaþ
hrime bihrorene, hryðge þa ederas.
Woniað þa winsalo, waldend licgað
dreame bidrorene, duguþ eal gecrong
wlonc bi wealle.

. . .
eal þis eorþan gesteal idel weorpeð.
(73a-80a, 110)

36 everything is the freer from Fate the closer
it seeks the centre of things. And if it
cleaves to the steadfast mind of God, it is
free from movement and so escapes the necessity
imposed by Fate.

Philosophiae Consolatio, Bk 4.6.15-16, CL 94.80; trans.
V. E. Watts, Boethius: The Consolation of Philosophy (Harmonds-
worth: Penguin, 1969), p. 136.

37 Op. cit., Ch. 39.7, p. 130, ll. 16-18.

The hall is the centre of eorla lif and the source of indryhten beaw, it gives a warrior's life significance and meaning, and his experience of his lord's grace takes place in the hall. The hall, then, destined to ruin, yet the stronghold of heroic morality, provides the symbolic expression of the insubstantiality of all heroic action, which was implied earlier in the dream-experience of ducal grace.

By the end of the poem, the containment image has also evolved into a complex metaphor, eal seo fæstnung (115b), embracing not only eternal happiness but also the only adequate moral action, namely, firmly keeping faith in God, which takes into account the contingencies of death, resurrection, and judgement. Finally, the poet makes explicit the irony of earthly finitude and flux when he turns from the earthly images of 'binding' to point to heaven, 'þær us eal seo fæstnung stondeð,' a fixity in which both past and future are contained in an eternal present. Men find real meaning in life only in their need of God, and human dignity only in living as heroic retainers of His constant faithfulness. The poem's theme reaches its final clarification at this point, but the abiding harmony which informs the poet's vision of death is, even to the wise, patient, and silent man, ultimately ineffable.

Chapter 3

THE UNWAVERING SEA

CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE IN THE SEAFARER

Such is the traditional editorial treatment of The Wanderer and The Seafarer that they might reasonably be called anthology twins; and such is the matching scholarship and criticism of these 'companion pieces' that a full bibliographical account of one will reveal as much of the other. They would also appear to be akin not only in name and place of origin but also in diction, theme, and length. It has even been suggested that they may be the work of a single poet.¹ But these patent affinities have been exaggerated, and it is because this view of the two poems is critically unsound, superficial, and misleading, because it neglects their distinctive individuality, that each has received a separate chapter in the present study.

The absurdity of Smithers's conjecture has been pointed out, together with the fact that The Wanderer is distinguishable by its consolatory topoi.² The just objection has recently been raised that a distortion of meaning results from forcing the poems into

¹ G. V. Smithers, 'The Meaning of The Seafarer and The Wanderer,' MAE, 26, No. 3 (1957), 152.

² J. E. Cross, 'On the Genre of The Wanderer,' Neophil, 45, No. 1 (1961), 71-72.

the same 'generic mould.'³ But they are unlike in their formal structures, too, The Seafarer's being less amenable to a dialogistic interpretation than that of The Wanderer. The Seafarer lacks any internal textual cues such as Swa cwæð.⁴ Sisam feels that the poems are close 'in tone and style,' but it has been convincingly shown that they diverge in respect of their poetic modes.⁵ On the basis of metre alone, the two can be separated and, as to subject-matter, they are quite literally poems apart.⁶ Each poem, in fact, makes a different moral discovery. In the one, a man buries his lord and

³ Stanley B. Greenfield, The Interpretation of Old English Poems (London and Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972), p. 18. See, too, p. 134.

⁴ See, e.g., Dorothy Whitelock, 'The Interpretation of The Seafarer,' in The Early Cultures of North-West Europe (H. M. Chadwick Memorial Studies), ed. Cyril Fox and Bruce Dickinson (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1950), pp. 261-62; I. L. Gordon, ed., The Seafarer, Methuen's Old English Library (London: Methuen, 1960), p. 10; W. F. Bolton, ed., An Old English Anthology (London: Arnold, 1963), p. 82; Stanley B. Greenfield, 'The Old English Elegies,' in Continuations and Beginnings: Studies in Old English Literature, ed. Eric Gerald Stanley (London: Nelson, 1966), p. 154. I am not in favour of a dialogistic interpretation of The Seafarer, since it needlessly disintegrates the poem in seeking to unify it. For a fairly full survey and a skilfully engineered re-proposal of the dialogue theory, see John C. Pope, 'Dramatic Voices in The Wanderer and The Seafarer,' in Franciplegius: Medieval and Linguistic Studies in Honor of Francis Peabody Magoun, Jr., ed. Jess B. Bessinger, Jr. and Robert P. Creed (New York: New York Univ. Press, 1965), pp. 164-93. If a connected line of thought can be traced running through the poem, then, as Whitelock says, 'the reason for dismembering it vanishes' (p. 262). See also Stanley B. Greenfield's 'Min, Sylf, and "Dramatic Voices in The Wanderer and The Seafarer,"' JEGP, 68, No. 2 (1969), 212-20, in which he defends the poem as a monologue.

⁵ Kenneth Sisam, Studies in the History of Old English Literature (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1953), p. 291; Daniel G. Calder, 'Setting and Mode in The Seafarer and The Wanderer,' NM, 72, No. 2 (1971), 264-75.

⁶ T. P. Dunning and A. J. Bliss, eds, The Wanderer, Methuen's Old English Library (London: Methuen, 1969), pp. 77, 79.

then seeks another in an attempt to regain his former happiness; in the other, a man leaves behind the joys of the world, knowing them for the false joys they are.⁷ In the present chapter, another distinctive feature of The Seafarer is demonstrated, viz., its peculiar metaphoric structure.

It would be fair to expect a poem of only 124 lines and entitled The Seafarer⁸ to be about a voyage or at least to do with seafaring. The Anglo-Saxon poem fulfils this expectation only in part, apparently dividing into 'two distinct segments,' the one to do with seafaring and the other purely homiletic, so that 'the poem begs for some kind of rapprochement revolving around this momentous "sea change."⁹ Such an expectation, however, presupposes a wholly literal interpretation of the sea; and it is only when we are prepared to allow for a metaphoric extension of the title that we can begin to see the purpose of a literally incongruous component in the poem's structure. Not surprisingly, the major controversy in the poem's scholarly criticism is over its poetic mode. Witness the sort of assertion it can lead to: 'to me The Seafarer, in spite of all that has been said to the contrary, ends at 64a, for here too, the seafarer never returns after those lines. No allegorical or symbolic interpretation of the first

⁷ E. G. Stanley, 'Old English Poetic Diction and the Interpretation of The Wanderer, The Seafarer and The Penitent's Prayer,' Anglia, 73, No. 4 (1955), 413-66, rpt. in Essential Articles for the Study of Old English Poetry, ed. Jess B. Bessinger, Jr, and Stanley J. Kahrl (Hamden, Conn.: Archon, 1968), p. 500.

⁸ The poem's universally accepted title, first used by Benjamin Thorpe in his ed. of the Exeter Book, Codex Exoniensis: A Collection of Anglo-Saxon Poetry (London: Society of Antiquaries, 1842), pp. 306-13.

⁹ A Critical History of Old English Literature (London: Univ. of London Press, 1966), pp. 219-20.

64 lines is in my opinion tenable, and no amount of sophistication can make it so.¹⁰ Greenfield prefers to confront the problem as an ambiguity in the significance of the sea voyage: whether it is meant 'as a literal peregrinatio pro amore Dei or as the ecclesiastical metaphor for a longing to seek the heavenly patria' (A Critical History . . ., p. 222).

The literalists, notably Greenfield and Whitelock, tend to concentrate on the peregrinatio and to overlook the fact that the poem never uses any expression corresponding to pro amore Dei.¹¹

¹⁰ A. A. Prins, 'The Wanderer (and the Seafarer),' Neophil, 48, No. 3 (1964), 247.

¹¹ Whitelock, op. cit., cites historical evidence to show that the speaker is a volunteer from the British or Irish Church who chose to find salvation in dangerous missionary work in foreign lands. William Witherle Lawrence, 'The Wanderer and the Seafarer,' JEGP, 4, No. 4 (1902), 460-80, also interprets the poem realistically; indeed, he reconciles the poem's two 'contradictory' attitudes towards the sea by interpreting them as the conflicting emotions in the mind of a man who hears the call of the sea (p. 467). This psychological interpretation is rejected as too modernistic to be plausible by O. S. Anderson in 'The Seafarer: An Interpretation,' K. Humanistika Vetenskapssamfundets i Lund Årsberättelse, 1 (1937), 1-49. Anderson resuscitates and adroitly revises Gustav Ehrismann's neglected allegorical-homiletic reading published in 'Religionsgeschichtliche Beiträge zum germanischen Frühchristentum: Das Gedicht vom Seefahrer,' Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur, 35 (1909), 213-18. According to Anderson, the sea has two significations: the dissatisfaction with earthly life and the yearning for life in heaven. Anderson's idea of taking safore (42a) to mean 'last voyage,' i.e., death, is supported by G. V. Smithers's detailed argument, op. cit.; 28, No. 1 (1959), 1-22; ' . . . Appendix,' No. 2 (1959), 99-104, supplemented by James Cross's 'On the Allegory in The Seafarer--Illustrative Notes,' ibid., 104-06. Gordon is right to read the whole poem as iconic of the good Christian's journey to his heavenly home (p. 8). As she says, the speaker's situation is 'an imaginative evocation of physical and emotional experiences that are used to illuminate a symbolic spiritual truth' (p. 10). But she errs in rejecting an allegorical dimension because she fails to appreciate the poem's 'mixed allegory,' which combines both 'metaphorical and literal writing' (J. E. Cross, rev. of Gordon's ed., JEGP, 60, No. 3, 1961, 547). As Calder points out, the idea of a heavenly home is what finally relates the speaker's spiritual experience to a metaphoric mode (pp. 268-69).

But without a stated cause any pilgrimage becomes pointless. This is not to say that the poem does not make use of the real experience of a vigil and a voyage; but simply that its purpose is not to present an actual seafaring, any more than it is to describe a monastic haven. And would a peregrinus, motivated by the desire for humility, compose a poem about himself? Again, Whitelock regards a figurative interpretation of the poem as an a posteriori inference lacking any textual authority:

we are given no hint of any kind that the beginning of the poem is anything other than a realistic description. . . . the poet fails to give the slightest clue that he is using the terms rocks, fetters, etc. as images. (p. 263)

To meet this objection convincingly requires a demonstration of The Seafarer's 'unity, coherence, and emphasis demanded by our modern critical sensibilities,' which Greenfield considers it hard to find (A Critical History . . . , p. 219). The method in this chapter, then, is to proceed as Pope thinks Ehrismann ought to have done, i.e., by explaining 'the sequence of thought from passage to passage' (p. 175).

The most obvious structural division of the poem is a tripartite one: seen in respective isolation, the first section (A1) describes a time of past tribulation; the second section (A2) a time of present conflict; and the third (B) the common homiletic theme lif is læne.¹² To these divisions and designations I would add the first four lines, which announce the poem's subject-matter. This introductory section

¹² These are Anderson's designations which I adopt here for convenience. He divides the poem as follows: A1 (1a-33a), A2 (33b-64a), and B (64b-124b). My section A2 extends to include 66a, while B runs from 66b to the end. One of the main interpretative problems, says Anderson, is the relation between A1 and A2 (p. 12).

may be called A:

MAEG ic be me sylfum soðgied wrecan,
 sibas secgan, hu ic geswincdagum
 earfoðhwile oft browade,
 bitre breostceare gebiden hæbbe 13

It has not been sufficiently appreciated in previous interpretations that these opening lines do not contain any explicit reference to the sea. The speaker says that he has 'a truth-tale to tell,' that he is going to present a 'real' (soð) personal experience of his own which we can expect him to portray poetically (gied).¹⁴ The speaker says that by this he means that he wants to tell about his own experiences (sibas) in a time of adversity

¹³ Textual quotations are from Gordon's ed., unless otherwise indicated. I have unobtrusively corrected the lower-case g in the opening word.

¹⁴ Stanley reads The Seafarer as an informal confession perhaps for reciting in monasteries (p. 498). I think this is correct. But I question his characterisation of the poem as a penitential prayer having a sacramental function, for the simple reason that the speaker does not enumerate his past sins. It is possible that soðgied might imply that the 'tale' is not only factually 'true' but also of a 'pious' nature since, like Old Norse trú, Anglo-Saxon soð can mean 'righteousness,' as in Soð-cýning (e.g., Beowulf 3055a, Christ 1228a, cf. 451a, The Phoenix 329a, 493a, etc.). Indeed, the consociation of ideas contained in these two words, trú and soð, in their respective languages, was such that, given a similarly specific context, it would be possible to translate soð- as 'Christian' (adj.). See G. V. Smithers, 'Four Cruces in "Beowulf,"' in Studies in Language and Literature in Honor of Margaret Schlauch, ed. Mieczysław Brahmér, et al. (Warsaw: Polish Scientific Publishers, 1966), p. 415. The following extract from Egils saga Skallagrímssonar confirms at least a partial semantic overlap between the two words: 'Aðalsteinn konungur var vel kristinn. Hann var kallaður Aðalsteinn inn trúfasti [soðfast?]' (Ch. 50, ed. Guðni Jónsson, Borgfirðinga Sögur, Íslendinga Sögur, Vol. 2, Reykjavík: Íslendingasagnautgáfan, 1953, p. 129). In terms of the subjective and personal context of the first line of The Seafarer, the most sensible via media seems to be the translation 'spiritual testimony' for soðgied. Cf. The Wife's Lament 1 and Vainglory 15b. Later in the poem, of course, the whole overtone of the wintry images is clearly one of spiritual malevolence. See Vivian Salmon, 'Some Connotations of "Cold" in Old and Middle English,' MLN, 74, No. 4 (1959), 314-22.

(geswincdagum), in order to give his audience an idea of how he, his heart bitterly troubled, has gone through crisis after crisis in his life (earfoðhwile oft þrowade). It is this spiritual anguish that is the principal subject of the first metaphoric sea-passage, A1 (5a-33a), in the poem.

In A1, the speaker describes his former spiritual condition in terms of the sea, i.e., a physical representation. The images are all of the deprivation of physical ease and its psychological effects. During dark winter nights, the speaker, alone and alert, often had to be on watch in the prow of a storm-battered skiff, his nerves tensed in the face of a monstrous sea. The tossing waves surged aboard and bound his feet in ice; gripped his heart and generated the heat of anxiety. There was constant danger: the cliffs were a close menace; there was excruciating despair: the warmth of human fellowship was a remote comfort. The whole experience wore him out both mentally and physically.

Yet, the image of the speaker alone at sea, his state of mind pathetically objectified in the winter seascape, opens up another dimension of experience when it includes the contrastive picture of the man 'þe him on foldan fægrost limpeð' (13), and this alternative existence is presented with a figurative texture. The poem weaves together auditory images of land and sea, so that the metaphoric sea-passage operates through a network of metrical juxtaposition and implied predication. Amid the squall's stinging flicks,

ic ne gehyrde butan hlíman sæ,
iscaldne wæg. Hwílum ylfeþe song
dyde ic me to gomene, ganetes hleoþor
ond huilpan sweg fore hleahtor wera,
mæw singende fore medodrince.
Stormas þær stanclifu beotan, þær him stearn oncwæð
isigfeþera; ful oft þæt earn bigeal,
urigfeþra; nænig hleoþega
feasceaftig ferð frefran meahte.

(18a-26b)

The words song, to gomene, hleobor, sweg, hleahfor, medodrince, and possibly oncwæð (describing the reverberation of voices in a large gathering of people) all have a courtly register. Thus, in the speaker's imagination the birds supplied his need for winemægum (16a). The life ashore was the only other existence he knew. So he looked constantly towards it, always interpreting his present unhappiness in terms of it. In the series of analogies the poem depicts the speaker's former joys. When it counterpoises his present state of mind and the present happiness of land-dwellers in the same picture, the irony in the image becomes explicit:

him gelyfeð lyt, se þe ah lifes wyn
gebiden in burgum, bealosipa hwon,
wlone ond wingal, hu ic werig oft
in brimlade bidan sceolde.

(27a-30b)

Suddenly, however, the land's aspect changes. Now the land itself is bound by ice and flailed by corna caldast (33a), a cold cloud-crop. Frost (hrim, 32a) and hail (lægl, 32b) reappear (cf. 17, both verbally and metrically). Even the figurative pattern of kinetic contrast is similar to the speaker's own suffering: gebunden (9b) and seofedun . . . ymb (10b-11a), bond (32a) and feol on (32b). The image of profusion, too, recalls gebrungen (8b). For the first¹⁵ time in the poem, the land is seen as the earth (32b), conjoined with the sea in a single image of the planet. The land has ceased to represent a relieving psychological state, since it no longer symbolises physical joy. Seafarer and landsman are, if only in externals, in the same dismal predicament.

The poem's technique so far is worth noting. First it establishes an atmosphere of doom and misery; then it images a situation free

¹⁵ The phrase on foldan (13a) refers not so much to the earth as to the civilised world. See, too, Gordon, p. 34, n. 13.

from this atmosphere; and then it removes that exemption by exposing an inherent flaw in the latter situation. In other words, the poem moves from harsh reality through apparent ideal to harsher reality. What it offers in one hand it takes in the other.

Retrospective implications converge at this point and their resultant is meiotic. At first glance, the seabirds seemed to sing for the speaker, to speak to him, and to entertain him. In effect, however, they merely cast him back on his humanity and into his spiritual affliction. The true nature of the birds in the scheme of Creation, their frailty and puniness, is graphically emphasised in l. 23, where a soft (isigfebera, 24a) tern is pictured between (þær . . . þær) the storm's boom and aggression and the towering, adamant granite. For the birds belong to the land and when they return to shore he must resume his isolation. Again, the singing of the birds was illusory and, in the context, more discordant (like the hleahtr of a company of men) than harmonious (as hleobor would seem to suggest).

On the other hand, the speaker was seeing his kinsmen in a new way. Their loud fun had a violence and a turbulence that made it precarious; for instance, there was always the danger of a fight breaking out in the hall and creating social distress (cf. cearselda fela, 5b). The speaker came to realise that his kinsmen were like the seabirds; that the obstreperous babble of human society was an aggravating affliction to his disconsolate soul; that their noise had no real meaning for the man with a spiritual need. So he concluded that no kinsman and, by implication, no bird¹⁶ could comfort

¹⁶ If W. S. Mackie's assumption is correct, that the scribe probably omitted a half-line at 25b, then I would suggest that this was its general sense (The Exeter Book, Part II: Poems IX-XXXII, EETS, OS 194, London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1934, p. 2). Cf. Gordon, p. 36, n. 25.

him. In fact, land-dwellers were in no state of mind to appreciate his wretchedness. For one thing, they were heartily soaked with wine (wlonc ond wingal, 29a); for another, they did not have his perspective of their way of living. And the poem leaves it to us to infer that, if the sea cannot, neither can the earth give respite to the soul. Land and sea are two sides of the same coin.

Taken as a metaphoric vehicle, the sea passage (A1) illustrates the speaker's bitre breostceare (4a) and emphasises in a precise way his attitude (earmcearig, 14a) towards his own spiritual need. His soul felt troubled, imprisoned, and fatigued by grief and despair; it felt alone and abandoned (feasceaftig, 26a); though among kinsmen, it felt alienated (bidroren, 16a) from them. The more he thought of the merriment of men, the more painful it was for his own soul. He looked to the society of men for his soul's salvation but could not find it there. For, in fact, the security and happiness of the world are illusory, real only to the godless man.

The contrasting perspectives in A1 suggest an ambivalence towards worldly happiness. This psychological ambiguity was most readily discernible in the bird-sequence (19b-25a) in which images of land and sea interacted. Once the speaker has realised that the landsmen's lot and his own are spiritually equal, the poem resolves his ambivalence by fusing the figurative values of land and sea in the concluding image of A1, ll. 31a-33a. It thus implies that worldly happiness is transient and proper to neither sea nor land, since both are, in reality, equally dismal and sterile. In effect, then, the sea throughout A1 is symbolic of all happiness on land; it is only as the opposite of the sea's cold that the land seems 'warm.' As Smithers demonstrates, the exiled seafarer appears most frequently in patristic literature as a symbol of the total human condition

('The Meaning of The Seafarer . . .,' p. 151). All men, therefore, whether wlonc or werig, whether sefteadig or feasceaftig, are deprived of true happiness.

For this reason the speaker looked for another destination. But the new land which he found lies far across the sea. Lines 33b-38b, then, give the position of the speaker in his spiritual quest at the time of telling his tale. The image is that of a heart tossed by a stormy mind:

Forþon cnyssað nu
heortan geþohtas, þæt ic hean streamas,
sealtyþa gelac sylf cunnige;
monað modes lust mæla gehwylce
ferð to feran, þæt ic feor heonan
elpeodigra eard gesece.

(ASPR, III, 33b-38b)

Sustaining the metaphoric mode, the poem says that fancies 'toss' the speaker's heart now that he voluntarily¹⁷ ventures into the 'tumultuous salt-spray on the deep seas (i.e., away from the coast)'; whenever he longs for the 'homeland of exiles,' the mind's worldly desire serves to remind his soul to press on.

Consistent with the spiritual register of A, this 'homeland of exiles' denotes the heavenly patria of Christians (peregrini) who are God's people and therefore strangers or exiles in this world. The spiritual significance of the land-sea imagery in A1 now becomes explicit. Up to now we have seen land in terms of the speaker's unhappy existence: it is the world humanity inhabits. It is to another kind of world entirely that he now journeys. The speaker now sees that this elpeodigra eard is the symbol of true happiness, whereas the sea, to the devout Christian, turns out to be a symbol of merely

¹⁷ See P. L. Henry, The Early English and Celtic Lyric (London: Allen & Unwin, 1966), p. 154, and Greenfield, 'Min, Sylf . . .,' pp. 217-19.

worldly happiness. So we connect the speaker's trials with a man's efforts to find salvation for his soul when he emerges from the delusion that spiritual happiness is to be found in the world. We now become fully aware of the speaker's new spiritual orientation: setting his course for his true home, he bravely puts out into the deep with the rest of his life.

Yet, understandably, worldly joys continue to demand attention, if only by virtue of their immediacy. So it is that, now that the speaker wants to reach elbeodigra eard, he has to venture over the same sea of worldly happiness in which he was before. It is the context that has changed inasmuch as the speaker's comments now have a point of reference different from that in A1. The speaker is no longer 'envious,' casting 'wistful glances at the fortunate on earth.'¹⁸ Consequently, while the symbolic meaning of the sea remains constant, the speaker's attitude to the sea is different, since he now looks beyond the sea. He receives this spiritual insight when he realises that there is no true happiness anywhere on the earth, no matter what differences there may appear to be between life on land and at sea. The interlaced figuration in ll. 40a-52b states that a host of worldly promptings try to stop the speaker's heart from seeking God. Alfred uses a similar image to render the idea of self-deception due to worldly temptations:

Swiðe eaðe mæg on smyltre sæ ungelæred scipstiera
 genoh ryhte stieran, ac se gelæreda him ne getruwað
 on ðære hreon sæ & on ðam miclan stormum. Hwæt is
 ðonne ðæt rice & se ealdordoom butan ðæs modes storm,
 se simle bið cnyssende ðæt scip ðære heortan mid

¹⁸ Stanley B. Greenfield, 'Attitudes and Values in The Seafarer,' SP, 51, No. 1 (1954), 17. Cf. F. N. M. Diekstra, 'The Seafarer 58-66a: The Flight of the Exiled Soul to its Fatherland,' Neophil, 55, No. 4 (1971), 437 and 444, n. 26. Pope regards a change in the symbolic significance of the sea as evidence supporting his dialogue theory (pp. 175-76).

ðara geðohta ystum, & bið drifen hider & ðider on
 swiðe nearwe bygeas worda & weorca, swelce hit sie
 ongemong miclum & monigum stancludum tobrocen? 19

Worldly joys are thus further defined for the Christian as temptations to which the passionate mind is prone. The following line from the Exeter Book version of the Lord's Prayer alerts us to a similar tone in the metaphor in A2: 'Ne læt usic costunga cnyssan to swiðe' (The Lord's Prayer I, ASPR, III, 9).

Sustaining the sea imagery, the poem then describes these temptations in terms of a man who has made up his mind to go to sea and is about to leave (modes fusne, 50b). There is the natural apprehension that comes to everyone, no matter the size, strength, success, or service of his manly heart (39a-43b); a man can think only of the voyage and of his safety. And yet, there is a pivotal ambiguity in the word longunge (47a): it can be taken either as a gnomic statement of a sailor's 'anxiety' or as an adversative introductory comment on his eagerness ('longing') to stay ashore, for the earth seems to become especially attractive when one has to leave it behind. The whole world is vibrant and lush with life and beauty. As Mackie translates ll. 48a-49b--

The woods blossom forth, the cities become fair,
 the fields are beautiful, the world breaks into life
(p. 5)

--it were as though, in going to sea, the sailor were abandoning the very source of his own life. But, in fact, everything serves only to remind him of his perilous journey. All this conflict may appear strange to the man who has material comfort, just as it is inscrutable to such a man that a cuckoo, summer's guarantor, can itself be mourn-

¹⁹ King Alfred's West-Saxon Version of Gregory's Pastoral Care, Ch. 9 (Hatton MS.), ed. Henry Sweet, EETS, OS 45 (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1871), p. 59, ll. 1-7.

ful while the rest of Nature rejoices in the new season. Nor could such a man have any idea of what it is like to be homeless. Lines 39a-57b, then, repeat the thematic rhythm of harsh reality (sæfore) mollified by apparent ideal (wongas wlitigað) which is in turn ironically abrogated only to make the inescapable reality harsher (wraclastas).

Yet, if the intensity of their emotions is comparable, the respective emotions of the two seafarers, spiritual and literal, are not. The man who seeks the salvation of his soul knows that, in addition to the fear of death (i.e., damnation), there is the temptation of worldly pleasures, which the sailor has no mind for. If the final wintry image in A1 carried powerful associations of death and of hell, there is now, to heighten the tension, the latent irresistible symbolism in the blossoming orchards 'of the resurrection of man at the Day of Judgement.'²⁰ In the final part of A2 (58a-66a) these two afflictions--the apprehension of hell and the anticipation of heaven--are poetically synthesised.

In ll. 58a-66a we return to the speaker. His attention travels 'beyond the confines of his mind' (ofer hreþerlocan, 58b) and returns to renew his heart with joy. Except for the oblique reference to men in the MS reading walweg (63a), the poem, now for the first time, does not present the speaker in terms of land-dwellers, for his interest lies over the vast sea, beyond the ends of the earth. The spiritual dilemma created by the fear of damnation and the temptation of worldly pleasures forces the speaker to concentrate his will

²⁰ N. F. Blake, "'The Seafarer'", Lines 48-49, 'N&Q', 207, No. 5 (1962), 163.

(hyge, 58a) on 'the way to the festive mansions,'²¹ his new destination.

The most striking effect of these closely knit lines is that of a sudden notional switch from the speaker's emotions to the joyous bird, so that we see that the bird, immediate and insistent, perfectly objectifies those emotions. We recognise the identity between its urgent desire and the speaker's own. In these lines we get a metaphoric sentence and a following symbolic sentence intersecting at the point at which the metaphoric departure (hweorfeð)²² is given a symbolic direction (-weg). It is this notional coincidence which enables us to see instantaneously wælweg as being the model of the way to elpeodigra eard. Thus the attributes of the hungry bird instantly become involved in our concept of the concentrated purpose of the Christian soul: the desire, urgency, delight, anticipation, the open proclamation of a prize to come (the sharpness of the bird's cry 'whets' the speaker's mind), and the unconditional acceptance of hope--in short, the attributes of spiritual devotion in a quick notional leap from mantic soul to evangelistic bird. The lines are about the speaker's getting on to the 'road' that will take him to what he most desires.²³ Moreover, the anfloga (62b)

²¹ For a justification of this interpretative translation of wælweg, see my article 'The Seafarer's Joy: The Interpretation of Lines 58a-64a,' UCT Studies in English, No. 5 (1974), pp. 8-20.

²² Cf. Vivian Salmon, "The Wanderer" and "The Seafarer", and the Old English Conception of the Soul,' MLR, 55, No. 1 (1960), 2.

²³ A typically modern aesthetic response to catachresis is Dorothy Whitelock's when she says that 'since wæl means "slaughter" or "the slain", this introduces a jarring note into a poem not dealing with death in battle' (Sweet's Anglo-Saxon Reader in Prose and Verse, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967, p. 278). As I see it, this latter definition of the poem is refuted by 72a-85b. But perhaps, in view of her totally literal reading of The Seafarer, Whitelock's may be an extreme reaction.

speaks to the speaker's heart, as none of the birds in A1 do; its cry penetrates his mind with insistent exultation. There is a purification of purpose, as the powers of the soul are focused on an intense, dramatic, and central action.

In prayer, the speaker's thought leaves this world, has a foretaste of the heavenly life, and returns to inspire his willing soul to seek God's fare:

	for þon me hatran sind
Dryhtnes dreamas	þonne þis deade lif
læne on londe.	(64b-66a)

Thanks to Gordon's comma, instead of the customary full-stop after ofer holma gelagu (64a),²⁴ the poem's most explicit statement of the theme of worldly transience can be read in its proper context of A2. The joy that this earthly existence offers (lifes wyn, 27b) is transient and, compared (and opposed metrically) with the joys of heaven, is like death. As a Christian, the speaker enjoys the life-giving warmth of the Lord; to him all worldly happiness is as cold as death. He has learned this lesson through social alienation and prayer. This is the overriding idea towards which the poem has been building the intensity of the ambivalence in A1. The Nap nihtscua-image made the statement figuratively: that the earth and everything on it is dead. Thus, only the speaker's spirit is willing: 'min hyge hweorfeð ofer hreþerlocan,/ min modsefa' (58a-59a). In order to describe his spiritual progress (living among 'swans,' 'gannets,' 'curlews,' 'mews,' 'terns,' and 'eagles'), the poem resumes a metaphoric continuity with the birds in A1 and images the speaker's new thought as a solitary flyer returning from the other land.

²⁴ Actually, S. O. Andrew anticipates Gordon in his Syntax and Style in Old English (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1940), where he punctuates to form one sentence in which forðon = 'because' (p. 33).

Before we can appreciate the literary relationship between the two main sections of the poem, i.e., A1. + A2 and B, we need to analyse B in isolation. During the last part of the poem, B (66b-124b), the speaker's comments are reflective and gnomic. He now proceeds to explain why worldly happiness is deficient. To do this, he employs again the thematic pattern of a harsh reality setting off an apparent ideal which is subsequently revoked in order to reveal a harsher reality. The poem seemingly subverts death and decay by using heroic imagery to suggest immortality: a noble warrior can die happy in the knowledge that his deeds of glory and righteousness will live on in men's praise, and that he will have a place in a heavenly duguð (72a-80a). The poem carefully controls this idea of life by contrasting earthly and heavenly lof (73a, 78a), and the context enhances the contrast: lifgendra (73a) praise will of necessity pass away, but a hero's glory will live (lifge, 78b) in eternity.

However, the days of such heroism are no more, for no one performs deeds of memorable nobility anymore (80b-85b). The syntactic equation of Dagas (80b) and earthly dreamas (86b) in metrically parallel lines casts all worldly happiness in a mould of mortality; it recapitulates and extends to eternity the topic treated figuratively in the first part of the poem, that there is no true happiness to be found in this world. And there is good reason for this decline in human achievement. In keeping with the universal frame of reference in B, all humanity and all the earth are seen as parts of Creation. For example, the passing of worldly splendour might suggest to a monastic Anglo-Saxon audience not only the futility of earthly glory but also the vanity of all eorðwelan (67a). For,

Peos woruld is æt ende, and we synd wædian gyt
heofena rices; þæt is hefig byrden.

(An Exhortation to Christian Living,
ASPR, VI, 20a-21b)

Part of this burden is the knowledge that the earth is in its old age, which is marked by the 'dwindling' of its 'life-force':

Blæd is gehnæged,
eorþan indryhto ealdað ond searað,
swa nu monna gehwylc geond middangeard.
(88b-90b)

Its spirit broken by time, the earth has lost its nobility. The contrast with the ecan lifes blæd (79b) of the devoutly Christian soul is strong. In the metaphor, the earth takes on the infirm qualities of human Yldo (91a), namely, loss of vigour and feeble physical and mental activities. The thematic significance of this perspective of the earth will be explained later. All we need to notice for the moment is what the metaphor helps us to see in a weaker humanity. The disparity in the metaphor makes explicit and effectively emphasises the human properties of grief, joy, sensation, gesture, reason, and, above all, spirituality (92a-102b). Mankind is thus seen to be in its last age and to have special consequences awaiting it: for the soul that is synna ful (100b) there is the terrible judgement of God.

Another reason for the deterioration of human duguð (86a) is elaborated in the Vercelli Homiletic Fragment:

Swa is nu þes middangeard mane geblonden,
wanað ond weaxað. Wacað se ealda,
dweleð ond drefeð dæges ond nihtes
miltse mid mane (ASPR, II, 31a-34a)

In the last age, righteousness is undermined as evil increases among men, and the earth becomes the setting for the Antichrist's domination.

Interestingly, in its comparative form, wac can mean 'degenerate' (87a).²⁵

²⁵ Gordon, p. 44, n. 87, where she quotes from Wulfstan's eighty-third homily: 'Hit is on worulde a swa leng swa wacre; men syndon swicole and woruld is þe wyrse' (Napier's text). See, too, the opening lines of his Sermo Lupi ad Anglos, and cf. Guthlac, ASPR, III, 43a ('Ealdað eorþan blæd')-92b, for a more detailed development of the decay of good and the growth of evil in the sixth age. See also Ch. 2 above, pp. 67-68.

The image in The Seafarer of sere human goodness reminds us that, in a style appropriate to its didactic purpose, the poem, besides organising its ideas through nodal images of gold and glory and through the metaphor of decrepitude, also exploits homiletic commonplaces. Thus, by showing the moral poverty of the world itself, the poem bankrupts the idealistic hope that true happiness (a moral good) may be found either in worldly fame or in worldly wealth. A noble life according to worldly standards is no longer possible for the simple reason that the noble spirit is dead; eorðwelan will not last for ever because the eorðe itself is about to die.

Reverting to the image of the earth's old age, we see that there is an irony in the fact that a man has only one old age and cannot regain his former vigour on earth, while the earth itself undergoes seasonal rejuvenation. This discrepancy between the earth's real and apparent age is most vividly and succinctly imaged in the ambiguous woruld onetteð (49b). The superficial meaning is that the world is once more charged with life, and we get the impression of eternal life. But the patristic notion of hexamorous time²⁶ is probably being alluded to in this image of spring: charged with new vitality, the world is actually charging towards its end, and the Day of Judgment approaches with every season. And this is suggested particularly in spring which, just as autumn suggests the deathly iciness of winter, suggests the parching heat of summer, when 'flos [foeni] decidit, et decor vultus eius deperiit' (James 1.11). In the larger perspective of the universe, the earth is also subject to the Creator: 'Micel biþ se Meotudes egða, for þon hi seo molde oncyrreð' (103);

²⁶ Cross, 'On the Allegory in The Seafarer--Illustrative Notes,' p. 105.

for it was He who

gestapelade stiþe grundas,
eorþan sceatas ond uprodor.
(104a-05b)

In ll. 66b-106b one image follows another, and then the first-- that of earthly death--is repeated and expanded. But in ll. 107a-10b we get not so much a succession of images as a fusion of images. The establishment of the universe is developed further by the mention of a humble and compliant mind (eaþmod, 107a), which is established in faith ('Meotod him þæt mod gestapelað, for þon he in his meahthe gelyfeð,' 108), and this in turn merges into the image of the disciplining of the wilful mind by the faithful mind.²⁷ The point of view, or rather centre of activity, moves from humility to faith and from faith to holiness (wisum clæne, 110b).

The poem now takes an extreme case, just as it did earlier to describe the total futility of burying gold in graves; and, as then (97a), it uses the concessive þeah þe-clause for contrastive emphasis. I follow the Holthausen-Mackie reading of l. 112, wiþ leofne [lufan] ond wið laþne bealo,²⁸ and interpret as follows: 'Everyone should

²⁷ The MS reading mod (109a) is generally emended to mon on the assumption that the poet, if not the scribe, intended the gnomic comment 'Styran sceal mon strongum mode' (Maxims I, ASPR, III, 50a). This assumption is not quite impregnable, despite the fact that the scribe of our poem would seem to have made an error in every ten lines he copied. Once one realises that the poem deliberately distinguishes þæt mod (108a), referring to eaþmod in the previous line, from strongum mode (109a), referring to 'Dol biþ se þe him his Dryhten ne ondrædeþ' (106a), the lines make good sense as they stand: 'The Creator founds that mind for him, because he trusts in His might; that mind has to steer the wilful mind, and still hold its course.' Let us allow the scribe the benefit of our doubt by, still to the poet's credit, calling the line the formulaic exploitation of context. Maxims I goes on 'Storm oft holm gebringeþ' and sets up a context of violence, which takes us back to the stormy, passionate mind of A2 (33b-38b).

²⁸ Gordon, p. 47, n. 111-12; Mackie, p. 8. Neil D. Isaacs, 'Image, Metaphor, Irony, Allusion, and Moral: The Shifting Perspective of The Seafarer,' in Structural Principles in Old

treat all men alike; become neither too attached to anyone nor too estranged from anyone; love friend and foe equally--though the one should kill the other.' Even in such a grievous case, justifiably avengeable and lamentable, the Christian must not take sides, and God will give him the strength to restrain his worldly affections. Or, again in terms of the sea metaphor, God is the destination of the spiritual life, heaven the native port of the spiritual seafarer who, if his faith is fixed, will be able to steer a middle course (mid gemete healdan, 111b) between friend and foe.

This ethical notion of enduring Wyrd through righteous involvement has a parallel in Alfred's adaptation of the Philosophiae Consolatio, where it grows out of the Boethian remedy of escaping the effects of Fortuna by the detached adherence to a philosophical mean. Wyrd has the power to affect not only the exercise of a man's free will but his peace of mind as well. But even Wyrd (115b), which is, for the speaker, the ultimate danger in this freedom of action, cannot obstruct the intention (gehygd, 116b) of the man who is 'willing to maintain a [humble attitude] of mind,' because, first-ly, 'God will help him to be impervious to the world around him',²⁹ and, secondly, wyrd . . . bið Godes weorc and therefore dependent on Him:

Forþam simle se wisa mon eall his lif læt on gefean

English Poetry, by Neil D. Isaacs (Knoxville: Univ. of Tennessee Press, 1968), pp. 19-34, believes that the point is that 'the Christian man must maintain his Christian charitable attitude not only toward his friends but even toward enemies who wish him full of fire [of hell] himself or wish to burn his devoted friendly lord on the funeral pyre' (p. 33). But the point of the whole poem is that no earthly ties whatever are to be trusted in.

²⁹ Anne Payne, King Alfred & Boethius: An Analysis of the Old English Version of the 'Consolation of Philosophy' (London: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1968), p. 94.

unonwendendlice 7 orsorg, þonne he forsihþ ægðer ge
 þas eorðlican god ge eac þa yflu, 7 hopað to þam
 toweardan; þæt sint þa ecan. Forþamþe God hine
 gehelt æghwonan singallice wuniendne on his modes
 gesældum, ðeah þe se wind þara earfoða 7 seo singale
 gemen þissa woruldsælda him on blawe. 30

Finally, the speaker enjoins Christians to consider where their
 'home' is (117). In his review of Gordon's edition, Cross adumbrates
 the figurative lineage of this image in the poem:

The clear double application of land (l. 66), as
 land opposed to sea in the descriptive section and
 as the transitory world in the homiletic section
 . . . together with the two terms to describe the
 desired destination, elbeodigra eard (l. 38), and
ham (l. 117), surely suggests that the first section
 of the poem could be a way of presenting the common
 ecclesiastical metaphor. (p. 547)

Such an identification of ham with elbeodigra eard, i.e., heaven,
 automatically disqualifies Whitelock's literalistic interpretation
 of ham as the monastery. As Cross affirms: 'though the monastery
 like death can be called a port, a harbour, in metaphorical writing,
 it is, within my reading, never referred to as patria' (ibid., p. 548).

Hu (118b) is indeterminately ambiguous. Its general implication
 in this context, however, lies perhaps somewhere between 'Nascimur in
dolore. Vivimus in labore. Morimur in merore. On sore eche we
 hider cumen. On swunche we here wunien. In wowe we henne witeð',³¹
 and the admonition with which St Benedict concludes his Regula,
 'Queque ergo ad celestem patriam festinas, hanc minimam inchoationis

³⁰ King Alfred's Old English Version of Boethius, Ch. 39.5,
 ed. Walter John Sedgefield (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1899), p.
 128, l. 8; Ch. 12, p. 27, ll. 8-13, contractions expanded.
 Indeed, the entire second book of the Philosophiae Consolatio
 provides an illuminating context of ideas for The Seafarer.

³¹ 'De Sancto Andrea,' Old English Homilies of the Twelfth
Century, ed. R. Morris, EETS, OS 53 (London: Trübner, 1873), No.
 29, p. 179.

regulam descriptam Christo adiuuante perfice.³² The most probable allusion of hu, I think, is twofold: to the physical death of men, which is a result of Adam's sin, and to the death of Christ (Halgan, 122b), which made all Christians worthy (usic geweorbade, 123a) to live in the holy presence of God. So all Christians should bear in mind their Lord's suffering;³³ for by accepting their lot as strangers in this dying world, they have a spem vivam (1 Peter 1.3) in heaven (hyht in heofonum, 122a).

A final reduction of the topics in 66b-105b to a single theme would show that A1 and A2 are complementary statements of the major theme in the poem, namely, that men build their happiness on infirm foundations. Worldly happiness ends with human life, and all life on earth is running down. In the poem, we pass through winter (15a), spring (48a-49a), and summer (54a), and then we find ourselves in autumn, the time for dying. The shifting seasons recall the thematic pattern pointed to earlier: harsh reality--apparent ideal--harsher reality. Spring and summer are a reprieve of winter, but a reprieve cancelled by the arrival of autumn, which is the warrant for another

³² 'Swa hwilc swa onnettende efst to þam heofonlice æþele gefremme ærest þurh Godes fultum þisne lytle regol, þe her awriten is, to anginne godre drohtnunge.' Die Winteney-Version der Regula S. Benedicti, Ch. 73, ed. M. M. A. Schröer (Halle: Niemeyer, 1888), p. 146, ll. 13-14, and p. 147, ll. 15-17, emphasis mine.

³³ BTS, s.v. gebencan, X, "'to bear in mind" a fact (that should influence conduct or opinion) stated in a clause.' Blickling Homily No. 8, 'Sawle þearf,' has an instructive gloss:

& us is eac mycel nedþearf þæt we gebencean
 hu Drihten us mid his þrowunga alesde from
 deofles onwalde . . . forðon þe he wolde us
 from ecum witum generian, & us gelædon on þa
 ecean eadignesse.

The Blickling Homilies of the Tenth Century, ed. R. Morris, EETS, OS 73 (London: Trübner, 1880), p. 97.

winter. The seasonal imagery, then, is iconic of the speaker's experience of earthly happiness. Men are deluded by the superficial rhythms of Creation into believing that humanity will continue to renew itself; that death is somehow an abominable denial of an earthly, human prerogative. But to the man who looks forward to the neowe eorðe (Apocalypse 21.1),³⁴ death comes not 'unwelcome' (unþinged, 106b). All the same, while those who are enjoying earthly prosperity can expect calamity, there is yet the implication in the metaphor of the seasons that those who are 'wretched' in this world must endure even more in order to attain their heavenly goal.³⁵

The metaphoric structure of The Seafarer continues this thematic pattern in a series of metaphors, each of which varies the central thematic analogy. And within this continuity there are minor continuities, each expressing an aspect of security and happiness. Both cearseld and elbeodigra eard have to do with some form of security and happiness; each contributes in some degree to the meaning of the solid foundations of ham, the thematic metaphor of The Seafarer.

³⁴ Homily No. 28, Early English Homilies from the Twelfth Century MS. Vesp. D. XIV, ed. Rubie D-N. Warner, EETS, OS 152 (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1917), p. 72, l. 11, cited by Smithers, 'The Meaning of The Seafarer . . .', p. 142.

³⁵ Cf. the following passage from the Anglo-Saxon Boethius in which the Alfredian interpolation is the last sentence:

Ði ic wundrige hwi men slen swa ungesceadwise
 þæt hi wenen þætte þis andwearde lif mæge þone
 monnan don gesælgne þa hwile þe he leofað,
 þonne hit hine ne mæg æfter þys life earmne
 gedon. Hwæt, we gewislice witon unrim ðara
 monna þe þa ecan gesælða sohton nalles þurh
 þæt an þæt hi wilnodon ðæs lichomlican deaðes,
 ac eac manegra sarlicra wita hi gewilnodon
 wið þam ecan life; þæt wæron ealle þa halgan
 martiras.

Ch. 11.2, op. cit., p. 26, ll. 13-21, contractions expanded.

occurring in Alfred's Boethius extends this range of connotations still further. The man who wants his house to last must not build it on sand, lest heavy rains wash it away; nor on a hill, lest a strong wind topple it:

Swa eac þæt mennisce mod bið undereten 7 awegeð of
his stede þonne hit se wind strongra geswinca astyroð
oððe se ren ungemetlices ymbhogan. 39

The speaker's seld, which would, in this analogy, be both his body and his 'material alignment with the world' (Payne, p. 94), was in an exposed situation and this allowed the difficulties and concerns caused by Wyrð to 'freeze his feet' and to 'scald his heart'; to penetrate his mind and to fill it with cear. Contemplating worldly prosperity, the speaker put himself wholly in the power of Wyrð; he became 'storm-tossed.' Since Wyrð is the outcome of men's actions-- 'siððan hit fullfremed bið, þonne hatað we hit wyrð' (Ch. 39.5, p. 128, ll. 13-14)--it follows that their happiness is affected by it in daily living. But Wyrð is also the divine adjustment of the world to accommodate men's free choice of actions; it is 'the divine force that keeps human error from going too far and keeps the storms from sinking the ship' (Payne, p. 108). Thus, only if men submit their wills to Him, can God make the optimum adjustments in their lives. True happiness is spiritual, not material:

Ac se þe wille habban þa ecan gesælda he sceal fleon
þone frecnan wite þises middaneardes 7 timbrian þæt
hus his modes on þam fæstan stane eadmetta, forþam ðe
Crist eardað on þære dene eadmodnesse (Ch. 12, loc.
cit.)

Used as an objective equivalent of anxiety, the metaphor cearseld first stands in contrast to burgum (28a), but then, by extension in the transitional image of winter, casts its shadow over all dwellings.

³⁹ Ch. 12, op. cit., p. 27, ll. 2-4, contractions expanded.

on land. The halls of men are like ships at sea; their peace depends on worldly joys which are always inconstant: 'gif ðu lufast þas woruld, heo besencð ðe, forðan ðe heo ne cann aberan hire lufigendas, ac cann beræcan.'⁴⁰ The uncertainty and mutability of life in a city (burh) are figured explicitly in the following sermon, and with far-reaching implications:

Ðe se is eure wagiende. and þere fore unstedefast.
and bitocneð þe abroidene bureh þat is in swo war-
liche stede. þat noht ne mai þer inne bileue. þat
muge ani wile ileste. þat is þis wrecche woruld.
þat eure is wagiende noht fro stede to stede. ac
fro time to time. and þat is on fele þinge ful
michel iseone. and on þe man. alre mast for me
nimeð of him mest geme. 41

In terms of the poem's metaphoric co-ordinates, then, cear = wyn (27b). To temper the harsh reality that happiness on land is not true happiness, the poem establishes, through metaphor, the prospect of another land, more desirable than the first. Yet the main purpose of the elbeodigra eard-metaphor is to point up the transience of all earthly life upon which earthly happiness depends. When the byrig in A2 (48a) please the eye in competition with the elbeodigra eard, which is invisible, we are meant to feel that such beauty is suspect because, as we have just seen in A1, the buildings themselves are on the weak foundations of human nature.

The poem implies that worldly joys do not give true happiness since, though surrounded by such delights, a man who faces the danger of death wants nothing of the world. Thus the sailor's dilemma--the fear of death at sea and the fear that his home may not be there if

⁴⁰ The Homilies of the Anglo-Saxon Church, ed. Benjamin Thorpe, II (London: Aelfric Society, 1846), 392.

⁴¹ 'De Sancto Andrea,' Old English Homilies of the Twelfth Century, p. 175.

he returns--epitomises the predicament of the Christian. For the Christian, who is an alien on this earth, life does not depend on the earth's life; his happiness, therefore, is not transitory. But since his true 'longing' is for ham, the heart of life, the symbol in the poem of security and true happiness, he still faces the harsher reality of having to 'brave' this world in order to reach that home. For the poem explicitly condemns life on land as deade and laene (like the seasons) and states that worldly happiness will not last for ever:

Ic gelyfe no
 þæt him eorðwelan ece stondað.
 (66b-67b)

The language contains a metaphor of building (stondað); welan can mean either 'riches' or 'happiness' (HMD, s.v.). The first lines of section B thus bring to a climactic focus the metaphoric and thematic structures of A1 and A2. The apparently problematic relationship between A1 and A2 is explained by the fact that antithetical tenors (insecurity and security), which happen to have thematically linked referents (cearseld and elþeodigra eard, respectively), are described in terms of the same corporate metaphoric vehicle, viz., seafaring. Moreover, the ambiguity of eorðwelan serves to anticipate the major topics of B: one, the ebbing grandeur and life of the earth itself and, two, the eternal foundations of heaven. Putting it in its simplest terms, the poetic mode of The Seafarer may be said to be the metaphoric juxtaposition of a sea passage and a homiletic theme.

Actually, this theme of security has been moving under the surface all along: to the Anglo-Saxon audience soð in the opening line implied permanence. And ham is the culminating image not only in the thematic structure of contrast between land and sea, but also in

the total metaphoric strategy of the poem.⁴² The series of dwelling/building-metaphors--cearseld, elpeodigra eard, ham--orders and binds the major theme in the poem through the agency of their common contextual connotations. Here, then, is conscious artistry from beginning to end. Striking not merely in themselves, these images cohere and move together towards a climax. Like its meaning, seeming at first plainly literal and obvious, the imaginative design of The Seafarer grows from the basic juxtaposition of metaphoric perspective and homiletic ambiguity.

⁴² Isaacs concurs (pp. 33-34). Cf. C. L. Wrenn, A Study of Old English Literature (London: Harrap, 1967), p. 144.

Chapter 4

THE NATIVE SEA

THE SCRIPTURAL TYPOLOGY AND HOMILETIC MODE OF EXODUS

Baptismi forma jam olim in diluvio praecessit,
ubi in figura salvandorum octo animae per lignum
salvatae sunt. Similiter et in mari Rubro, ubi
aqua baptismum, et rubor sanguinem praeferibat.

Hugh of St Victor,
De Sacramentis Christianae Fidei¹

Francis Junius, the first editor of the Anglo-Saxon poem now known
as Exodus, attributed the poem to the illiterate cowherd Caedmon.

This is easy to understand. Caedmon's canon, as Bede gives it,
corresponds suggestively with the contents of the manuscript which
contains the poem. It was no doubt partly on the basis of this
account by Bede that Junius called his collection Cædmonis Monachi

Paraphrasis Poetica:

Canebat autem de creatione mundi et origine humani
generis/ et tota Genesis historia, de egressu Israel
ex Aegypto, et ingressu in terram repromissionis,
de aliis plurimis sacrae scripturae historiis, de

¹ 'The form of baptism already preceded once in the flood
where, in a figure, eight souls of those to be saved were saved
through the wood. Similarly also in the Red Sea where the water
proclaimed baptism and the redness blood.' Bk 2.6.15, PL 176.
460B-C; trans. Roy J. Deferrari, Hugh of Saint Victor on the
Sacraments of the Christian Faith, Publications of the Mediaeval
Academy of America, No. 58 (Cambridge, Mass.: Mediaeval Academy
of America, 1951), pp. 301-02. Hugh (1096-1141) so processed
Augustinian doctrine that he came to be known as Alter Augus-
tinus (p. ix).

incarnatione dominica, passione, resurrectione et
 ascensione in caelum, de Spiritus Sancti adventu
 et apostolorum doctrina 2

These subjects were probably considered by Abbess Hild to be the staple topics of a missionary programme and, certainly, the works of Moses, though not overtly Christian, could readily be interpreted in the light of spiritual doctrine and could thus lead men to salvation, which, as Bede immediately goes on to say, was Caedmon's chief aim.³

Though, admittedly, Caedmon's Hymn provides a scant sample of his Christian adaptation of Germanic heroic tradition, that Caedmon did not compose Exodus or any of the other poems in the Junius MS. is now generally agreed, partly because the stylistic differences between Genesis, Exodus, Daniel, and Christ and Satan would seem to indicate a multiple authorship, and partly because the Exodus-poet must have been a man of wide reading.⁴ On the other hand, some

2 Song he ærest be middangeardes gesceape ond bi fruman moncynnes ond eal þæt stær Genesis (þæt is seo æreste Moyses boc); ond eft bi utgonge Israhela folces of Egypta londe ond bi ingonge þæs gehatlandes ond bi oðrum monegum spellum þæs halgan gewrites canones boca, ond bi Cristes menniscnesse ond bi his þrowunge ond bi his upastignesse in heofonas, ond bi þæs Halgan Gastes cyme ond para apostola lare

HEGA, Bk 4.24, Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People, ed. Bertram Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), p. 418; trans. Sweet's Anglo-Saxon Reader in Prose and Verse, ed. Dorothy Whitelock (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), p. 48, ll. 74-81, macrons omitted. The Junian title is cited by C. L. Wrenn in his A Study of Old English Literature (London: Harrap, 1967), p. 98.

3 Israel Gollancz, introd., The Caedmon Manuscript of Anglo-Saxon Biblical Poetry, Junius XI in the Bodleian Library (Oxford: Milford, 1927), p. lxviii.

4 Bernard F. Huppé, Doctrine and Poetry: Augustine's Influence on Old English Poetry (New York: State Univ. of New York Press, 1959), pp. 104-05.

scholars have seen Exodus not as a separate poem, but as forming a single poem with Daniel, which succeeds Exodus in the MS.⁵ But the current position on the individual integrity of the poem is that of its latest editor, that the Exodus-poem has a superior poetic quality, and for this reason may be regarded as having been composed by a different poet.⁶ Indeed, what distinguishes Exodus from the rest of the Junius miscellany is the poem's presentation of the Biblical material: it is neither a literal translation nor a slavish paraphrase, but rather, through its imaginative strategy, an ingenious way of poetising Scriptural narrative. As Shepherd observes when he compares it with Genesis, 'the encrustation of meaning is deeper, more allusive and more learned. It is a rich, energetic and difficult poem with an extraordinary vocabulary and a violent, masterful syntax.'⁷

Any reading of Exodus that rests upon its poetic unity, however, must be tentative in view of the poem's undeniable textual imperfec-

⁵ In his ed., Exodus and Daniel: Two Old English Poems (New York: Heath, 1907), Francis A. Blackburn sees them as parts of the same poem (p. vii), though composed by different authors (p. xxi). James W. Bright, on the other hand, in his 'The Relation of the Cædmonian Exodus to the Liturgy,' MLN, 27, No. 4 (1912), implies that both are the work of a single poet (p. 101, col. 1).

⁶ Edward Burroughs Irving, Jr, ed., The Old English 'Exodus,' Yale Studies in English, Vol. 122 (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1953), pp. 14, 27. (Cleaned of its macrons and square brackets, this is the basic text quoted in the present chapter. The abbreviation NN will be used to refer to Irving's revisional article, 'New Notes on the Old English Exodus,' Anglia, 90, No. 3, 1972, 289-324.) Confirming Irving's view, Wrenn says that Exodus stands 'really quite apart' since it is 'original and creative in treatment' (p. 101). Contrariwise, R. T. Farrell has convincingly demonstrated the self-contained unity of Daniel (RES, 18, No. 70, 1967, 117-35).

⁷ Geoffrey Shepherd, 'Scriptural Poetry,' in Continuations and Beginnings: Studies in Old English Literature, ed. Eric Gerald Stanley (London: Nelson, 1966), p. 30.

tions. In addition to the seventeen inscrutable lacunae there are a number of disquieting possibilities: three missing folios, two interpolations, and a misplaced conclusion (Irving, pp. 1-12). The total loss in terms of editorial verse-lines is, at the most, about a hundred and eighty though, in view of the scribal practice of leaving gaps for illustrations, a more realistic figure is about a hundred, perhaps less.⁸ Fortunately, this leaves us with enough of the poem to make a valid criticism of its structure and meaning. As Farrell notes in his (direct) defence of the unity of Exodus: 'At very least we have enough of the text left to see very clearly the pattern and structure which the author intended.'⁹

The artistic technique in the poem is easily discernible as having a structural basis, or what Cross would call an 'unusual structural principle (if it is not lack of principle).'¹⁰ For example, the Crossing of the Red Sea seems to be the poem's dramatic and thematic climax, and yet it is interrupted by an apparent

⁸ There is little to be gained from speculating further here, except to point to some possibly significant, hard signs elsewhere in the codex. For example, pp. 1 and 2 (together containing 48 editorial verse-lines) must originally have separated two completely blank pages, since an illustration faces p. 1 (cf. pp. 164 and 165, and Irving, ed., p. 10). Again, pp. 53-63 in the codex contain only 156 editorial verse-lines, whereas Irving's calculus (p. 7, for '50 verse-lines' read '30 verse-lines,' and p. 10) would give 330. Far more important for the purposes of this study is, instead, the question of how much of the poetry has been lost. It is at least credible that the two folios missing from between pp. 148 and 149 contained a short account of Joseph and his Egyptian adventures, and that the folio missing from between pp. 164 and 165 included a description of Pharaoh's army entering the parted Red Sea and of Moses using his rod to close it again.

⁹ Robert T. Farrell, 'A Reading of OE. Exodus,' RES, 20, No. 80 (1969), 402, n. 7.

¹⁰ J. E. Cross, 'The Old English Period,' in The Middle Ages, ed. W. F. Bolton, Sphere History of Literature in the English Language, Vol. 1 (London: Sphere, 1970), p. 29.

digression. At about (allowing for some missing lines) the centre of the poem, two 'interpolated' stories, of Noah and Abraham, make up the so-called 'Exodus B' (362a-446b). Nowadays no one doubts the textual authenticity of the passage, but its appropriateness remains 'questionable.'¹¹ Any exposition of the poem's thematic structure would have to accomodate this passage, and so far the passage's thematic valence has not been satisfactorily described. Huppé, for example, sees the relevance of the episodes in a theme of salvation (pp. 220-23). Irving (p. 9) and Greenfield (p. 157), however, argue that the Noah-Abraham episodes illustrate the theme of God's covenant with man. Finally, Neil D. Isaacs believes that, while the poem's explicit theme is indeed covenantal, it is maintained by an underlying eschatological theme.¹² Now, the Noah-Abraham episodes form part of the immediate context of the description of the Red Sea Crossing, which happens to be the major sea-passage in the Exodus-poem. The referential status of the episodes thus becomes a central concern in this study, for we need to establish their thematic emphasis before we can give the sea passage a metaphoric interpretation.

Arising from this question of the organic meaning of the two episodes is the discussion of the liturgical quality of the Exodus-poem as a whole. Bright was the first critic to point out that the sequence of events retold in Exodus--the Flood, the Sacrifice of

¹¹ Stanley B. Greenfield, A Critical History of Old English Literature (London: Univ. of London Press, 1966), p. 154.

¹² 'Exodus and the Essential Digression,' in Structural Principles in Old English Poetry, by Neil D. Isaacs (Knoxville: Univ. of Tennessee Press, 1968), pp. 155-57. Carolyn Wall, in her 'Stylistic Variation in the Old English Exodus,' English Language Notes, 6, No. 2 (1968), 79-84, suggests that the poem's main theme centres on obedience to the will of God (p. 84).

Isaac, and the Crossing of the Red Sea--is included in the Bible readings for Holy Saturday when catechumens used to be baptised (op. cit.). While accepting this symbolic structure of the Exodus-poem, Huppé believes the exegetical writings of the Fathers, which inform the liturgy, to be the more likely source of the poem's interpretational rationale (p. 218). Though Irving discounts any typological import whatsoever when he states bluntly that 'no sane reader would be likely to call Exodus a poem about baptism' (p. 15), there is current critical consensus in Bright's favour, at least as far as the baptismal significance of the poem is concerned:

The passage of the Red Sea, even more emphatically than the flood, figures in the early theology of baptism. . . . Some of the correspondences disturb the deepest slumbering archetypes. Baptism in the liturgy was itself a phase in the struggle against the primal monsters of the waters. . 13

My own position is that the poem most certainly exploits traditional, patristic ideas of baptism; in particular, the poem is about the creation of a holy mankind in which baptism forms the central act. Actually, as Cross points out, the Crossing of the Red Sea and the Genesis-episodes comprise only three of the twelve readings for Holy Saturday (p. 29), and liturgical kinship does not make the episodes poetically organic ipso facto. If, then, we would interpret Exodus typologically with any plausibility, we must demonstrate how the poetic emphasis of the poem's themes justifies a typological reading based on the external context of Scriptural exegesis and

¹³ Shepherd, p. 31. Similarly, Francis Lee Utley, 'The Flood Narrative in the Junius Manuscript and in Baltic Literature,' in Studies in Old English Literature in Honor of Arthur G. Brodeur, ed. Stanley B. Greenfield (Eugene, Ore.: Univ. of Oregon Press, 1963), p. 208; Charles W. Kennedy, The Earliest English Poetry, forew. James P. Pettegrove (1943; rpt. Totowa, N. J.: Rowman & Littlefield, 1971), pp. 177-80. But see Greenfield, A Critical History . . ., p. 158.

patristic commentary.

A peculiar feature of the Anglo-Saxon Exodus-poem is that it presents two main spheres of historical experience. The first sphere encompasses the historical events of the exodus story: roughly, the leadership of Moses, the attitude of the Israelites to the journey, the heat, the darkness, the fear, the destruction of Pharaoh's army, and finally the rejoicing of the Israelites on the other side of the Red Sea. The second sphere of experience takes in the historical events of the putative interpolations. (This second sphere of experience could be subdivided into at least two further spheres, involving first Noah and then Abraham, but for the purposes of this discussion it will not be necessary to do so.) Whether or not the events of the second sphere are in some way only historically part of the exodus narrative, or whether they are in fact meant to be read figuratively, depends upon the literal congruity between the 'interpolations' and the rest of the poem. Clearly, in the text as it stands, the episodes are historically at odds with the rest of the narrative, since they are, to use Auerbach's phrase, 'violations of chronology',¹⁴ and this strongly suggests that the exodus story is meant to be interpreted in terms of these episodes. The intrinsic structural disposition of the poem thus implies a coherent figurative dimension. On stylistic grounds, too, it might be argued that the apparent abruptness of this unrealistic collocation¹⁵ is related to the poet's 'unique use of metaphor' (Wrenn, p. 98). It would seem,

¹⁴ Erich Auerbach, Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature, trans. Willard R. Trask (1946; Princeton, N. J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1968), p. 158.

¹⁵ J. E. Cross and S. I. Tucker, 'Allegorical Tradition and the Old English Exodus,' Neophil, 44, No. 2 (1960), 123.

then, that a figurative reading is required of the Noah-Abraham episodes.

To be integral in the poem, therefore, the two main spheres of historical experience must be related through implicit continuities. For example, righteousness, obedience, and faith are literally attributed to Moses, to Noah, and to Abraham. In other words, their relation might be described as that of the simile: Moses is like Noah and Abraham in righteousness, obedience, and faith. But precisely because it is closed by a simile, the whole 'interpolated' passage can carry only limited concomitant meaning when read as figurative, and the exodus story is in turn prohibited by the controlling comparison from assuming any further implications beyond those of individual righteousness, obedience, and faith.

An important corollary follows from this: if the Noah-Abraham episodes can be related to the exodus story within a larger context of historical experience, i.e., larger than mere similitude, then further thematic implications can be traced in their figurative presentation in the Exodus-poem. And it is when looking for similarities and continuities, when seeking to discover and to describe how these episodes bear a broader relation to the rest of the poem, that their typological significance becomes apparent. For the comparative process, once begun, continues until all relevant contextual knowledge is exhausted.

The essence of any typology is that its types, while retaining the characteristics of their historical reality, are also figurative. As Auerbach says, for the Church Fathers, 'generally speaking every event and every phenomenon referred to in the Old Testament is conceived as a figure which only the phenomena and events of Christ's Incarnation can completely realize or "fulfill"' (p. 195). Thus

Aelfric can hardly be said to be initiating an interpretative attitude to the Pentateuch when he illuminates Moses' literary purpose and inspiration:

Moyses hi awrat, to steore and to lare ðam ealdan
folce Israhel, and eac us on gastlicum andgite.
Pa bec wæron awritene be Criste, ac þæt gastlice
andgit wæs þam folce digle, oð þæt Crist sylf com
to mannum, and geopenede þara boca digelnysses,
æfter gastlicum andgite. 16

The educated Anglo-Saxon Christian would bring to bear on a poem all he had been told of the symbolism of any particular Biblical story, and his mind would be crowded with information derived, with equal authority, from the Bible and the Scriptural commentaries (Cross and Tucker, loc. cit.). One is reminded of the later Old Testament plays which were full of assorted typologies, treating as they did 'persons, things and occurrences recorded before the earthly life of Christ as prefigurings of similar matters recorded in the Gospels'.¹⁷ In fact, in twelfth-century ritual drama, Noah represented the Fall, Abraham and Isaac the Crucifixion, and Moses the Commandments.¹⁸

The whole issue of the poem's secondary (including non-Biblical) sources has been an absorbing interest of scholars for nearly a century. Once Samuel Moore had paralysed the argument in favour of the poem's debt to Avitus' De transitu Maris Rubri, only to declare that

¹⁶ The Homilies of the Anglo-Saxon Church, ed. Benjamin Thorpe, I (London: Aelfric Society, 1844), 186. Similarly: 'we willað eow secgan þæt gastlice andgyt byssera ealdra gesetnyssa, forðan ðe seo ealde æ is mid gastlicum andgyte afylled, and Crist geopenode us ða deopan digelnyssa, and hi ðurh hine sylfne gastlice gefylde' (ibid., II, London: Aelfric Society, 1846, 198).

¹⁷ Karl Young, The Drama of the Medieval Church (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1933), II, 265.

¹⁸ A. P. Rossiter, English Drama from Early Times to the Elizabethans: Its Background, Origins and Developments (London: Hutchinson Univ. Library, 1950), pp. 55-56.

'the problem of its immediate source is still unsolved,'¹⁹ the way was clear for Bright to follow with his liturgical theory, which, as we have seen, bears no more than a partial resemblance to the Exodus-poem. No other comparably substantial sources have so far been identified.²⁰ The imported material could have reached the poet either from a single 'literary' source or from scattered fragments of 'factual' material. About the former, however, Irving has misgivings:

The first of the two kinds of source which might be suspected, a literary source where the material has already been shaped for a later poet's use, has not been discovered and there are some grounds for doubting that such a source ever existed.

(Ed., p. 16)

But, interestingly, before he turns his attention to factual sources, Irving has to admit that 'the most obvious sources have scarcely been touched, while odd bits of information, almost always of a factual nature, have been gathered from the most diverse authorities' (p. 17). To my mind, this observation exposes and highlights the fact that the issue really depends on our approach. For it would seem that such has been the Exodus-poem's imaginative assimilation and distortion of its secondary sources that most of its imported material has simply become difficult to identify. Or, putting it more simply: because the poet himself regarded his patristic reading-matter as a primary source, i.e., as factual (Cross and Tucker, loc. cit.), he felt quite at liberty to interpret it poeti-

¹⁹ 'On the Sources of the Old-English Exodus,' MP, 9, No. 1 (1911), 107.

²⁰ An interesting suggestion by Aaron Mirsky, 'On the Sources of the Anglo-Saxon Genesis and Exodus,' ES, 48, No. 5 (1967), 385-97, is that the Exodus-poet borrowed narrative details, unrecorded in the Vulgate, from old Hebrew writings, such as the Talmud, midrashim, and liturgical psalms.

cally, with as much 'inorganic',²¹ independence as he used the Scriptural material. The Exodus-poet is highly original in his treatment of the basic exodus story, and it seems clear that he has hammered out his secondary borrowings before working them to his own purpose. Peter J. Lucas adopts the approach of literary analysis, and his idea of a secondary source acting as a 'basis of suggestion' for a highly imaginative poet is a good one,²² so long as we do not overlook the larger aspects of this inorganic use of secondary material. Not only must we take into account the tone and context in the poem in hand,²³ but we must also consider the feasibility of the source in terms of the poem's harmonised strategies of imagery, theme, movement, and structure. The source must bring us closer to what the poem is saying.

The following typological interpretation of the Exodus-poem is based primarily on the metaphoric structure of the description of the Crossing of the Red Sea. But there are other, more direct indications that such a method of interpretation is the correct one. To begin with, the very opening of the poem proposes the Mosaic Law as the poem's subject, rather than the Crossing of the Red Sea which, as it turns out, is the poem's dramatic and thematic focus. Thus, if the presentation of the Crossing contributes at all towards the

²¹ This is Moore's term to describe details merely imagined out of the potentialities of the Scriptural material but keeping its essential facts. Its opposite, 'organic,' refers to data imported to augment the information of the Scriptural material (pp. 84-85).

²² 'The Cloud in the Interpretation of the Old English Exodus,' ES, 51, No. 4 (1971), 297.

²³ See Stanley B. Greenfield, The Interpretation of Old English Poems (London and Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972), pp. 18-25.

subject of Mosaic Law, then it does so on an imaginative level. And, as we soon discover, the poem is not in fact heterocosmic, for the Crossing of the Red Sea images the redemptive and retributive qualities of God's laws, while it illustrates further that, paradoxically, both qualities are typologically operative in the sacrament of Baptism.

But more to the point is the poem's own implicit injunction that we should adopt the practice of patristic exegesis in order to 'unlock' Moses' truths and so obtain God's mercy:

Gif onlucan wile lifes wealhstod,
 beorht in breostum, banhuses weard,
 ginfæstan god Gastes cægon,
 run bið gerecenod, ræd forð gæð;
 hafað wislicu word on fæðme,
 wile meagollice modum tæcan
 þæt we gesne ne syn Godes þeodscipes,
 Metodes miltsa. (NN 523a-30a)

[If the interpreter of life [i.e., the soul], bright in the breast, the body's preserver, has the desire to unlock the abundant good with the keys of the Spirit, the hidden meaning will be disclosed, advice will come. It has wise words in its bosom, it will be a strong teacher of the mind, so that we shall not lack God's guidance, the mercy of our Maker.]

This is a clear reference to the commonplace mediaeval distinction between the letter and the spirit, i.e., between the literal and the figurative interpretation of any part of Scripture.²⁴ Thus a typological reading of the exodus story, as the poem presents it, is explicitly justified by the poem itself. It is only when we are fully aware of this exegetical approach, best exemplified in patristic literature, that we eventually discover what lies still deeper than the merely figurative level of the Exodus-poem. Above all, let us remember that it is the exodus story as it is uniquely visualised in MS. Junius 11 that we are interpreting, and not as it stands in

²⁴ Even Irving concedes this (ed., p. 98, n. 565-8).

the Vulgate Bible or in patristic literature or in any other contemporary form. It will be well, then, to leave aside for the moment the matters of the poem's typology and imaginative sources, to return instead to the poem's retelling of the Old Testament story, with a view to tracing a consistent and dominant theme in the poem, and in this way establish a context in which the figurative action of the poem's major sea-passage--the Crossing of the Red Sea--will become visible.

As to the conclusion of the poem, Irving rearranges the last seventy-five lines in his edition. He takes ll. 516a-48b to be a conventional homiletic ending and so puts it after the last line of the poem; this transposition, he says, 'improves the sense immeasurably' of the MS ending which is 'confused to the point of incomprehensibility' (p. 11). But Wrenn's reservation, that Irving's reshaping assumes modernistic architectonics, is perhaps valid.²⁵ James W. Earl objects more strongly to the a priori interchange because 'it has never been seriously argued that the poem has been left unfinished to an extent which might significantly affect its structure and meaning. Irving's method for handling this problem--by restructuring the poem's conclusion--cannot be defended.'²⁶ The following

²⁵ C. L. Wrenn, rev. of Irving's ed., RES, 6, No. 22 (1955), 184.

²⁶ 'Christian Traditions in the Old English Exodus,' NM, 71, No. 4 (1970), 570. The rearrangement is not a happy one, nor entirely convincing either when, shortly after explaining his editorial liberties, Irving can speak of the 'strong impression of form and unity which Exodus undeniably gives' (p. 13) as one of the reasons for the source-hunting done by previous scholars. In any event, Irving has subsequently repented and restored the MS arrangement of the text (NN, p. 320). He has also retracted his earlier stand (ed., p. 20) on the poet's indifference to Christian allegorical tradition (NN, p. 290). But Irving's first arrangement is still apparently misleading critics: e.g., Richard M. Trask, in 'Doomsday Imagery in the Old English Exodus,' Neophil, 57, No. 3 (1973), 295-97, finds the concluding homiletic section

discussion of the poem is an attempt to show that, as it stands in the MS, the homiletic section is not only comprehensible but coherent within the poem's total structure, and that the poem achieves itself by ending with a picture of the Israelites triumphant.

(1)

The central idea in the first section of the Exodus-poem (1a-62b) is that of separation. This idea is expressed in a number of ways, each to a different structural purpose. To begin with, in the exordium the poem sets Moses apart from the rest of mankind by metrically contraposing in the same line his wondrous pronouncements and the earth itself:

HWAET, WE FEOR AND NEAH gefrigen habbað
ofer middangeard Moyses domas,
(wæclico wordriht were cneorissum--
in uprodor eadigra gehwam
æfter bealusioðe bote lifes,
lifigendra gehwam langsumne ræd)
hæledum secgan! Gehyre se ðe wille!

The figure is of an exalted Moses declaring God's law to all the world, his voice propertied to reach its every corner. Consequently, Gehyre se ðe wille! is a partly ironic exclamation. Our attention is drawn not only to the texture of the law but also to its effect. Extending the idea of separation, the law distinguishes the qualities of life of the living and the dead: it is called 'life's compensation,' referring to earthly life which is a 'stricken time.' Eadigra is ambiguous: it can be taken in the sense that the wonder of the righteousness uttered by Moses may be truly perceived only by those who dwell in the bliss of heaven; alternatively, it may mean that, being the expression of a holy God and a reflection of heavenly life, the

'straightforward and relatively anticlimactic' (p. 297). I preserve the MS line-sequence throughout.

marvellous truths are themselves the very means and substance of that blessedness. By contrast, these same truths are an enduring counsel to those still on earth who hear and heed them, but an exacting decree to those who do not. In other words, through a series of contrasts--far and near, earth and heaven, death and life, joy and suffering, speech and silence--the poem conveys the immensity of Moses' spiritual stature and dignity.²⁷

In the image immediately following this introduction, Moses' unique spirituality is underscored still further by a description of his relationship with God. When Moses was in the desert he was given knowledge of God's majestic Person 'ðone ylðo bearn ær ne cuðon' (28). Figuratively, Moses becomes the living testimony of God's miraculous creative power, which raised him out of the barren desert of humanity; and more to the point, Moses becomes the earthly centre of this power. Yet, despite his pre-eminence, Moses is referred to only pronominally when he is in the presence of God, simply as Þone (8a) and him (10b), perhaps implying his humility before his Maker. He wæs leof Gode (12a) is the most explicit statement in the poem of Moses' special relationship with God. Moses' greatness, then, is represented by the images of vastness, terrestrial and celestial, and of uniqueness. It is with all these attributes that Moses leads the people of Israel out of Egypt.

A final development in this section of the idea of separation or distinction is a direct result of this closeness of Moses to God. When the Angel of Death turns through Egypt, He does not strike any of the Israelite children. The Israelites are thus marked out and

²⁷ The Proem may be a versification of Moses' last song in Deuteronomy 32.1-43 ('Audite caeli quae loquor, audiat terra verba oris mei' etc.).

exempted from the fate of the Egyptians, but only insofar as they are kinsmen of Moses (52). The verbal texture of the poetry reflects this new aspect of the theme:

He wæs leof Gode, leoda aldor,
 horsc and hreðergleaw, herges wisa,
 freom folctoga. Faraones cyn,
 Godes andsacan, gyrdwite band.
 (12a-15b)

The spiritual and national dimensions of the conflict between the Israelites and the Egyptians are represented locally in l. 14. The two nations are separated syntactically as well as metrically, while the alliterative link embodies their mutual antagonism. The conceptual contrast is strongly indicated by the caesura, and the image centres on Moses as grammatical subject (folctoga) acting against the whole Egyptian nation (cyn). He acts out of love for God, and his 'folk,' the Israelites, are entirely dependent on him to take them out of the land of Egypt and into safety. And when Moses eventually leads them out, he takes them past many other lands and keeps them going on a narrow, unknown route (enge anpaðas, uncuð gelad, 58). The images of other nations serve to set off the departing Israelites making their way between the various countries. In short, the poem gets us to focus on the Israelites as a people different from the other peoples of the world.

Turning to the actual journey of the Israelites, we find that the poem incorporates marine metaphors to differentiate the two nations, Israelites and Egyptians, as they traverse the desert. The poem employs antithetical images as metaphoric characterisations of the opposing peoples, and in the struggle that ensues between them, these metaphors contribute, at the poem's simplest level, to the theme of separation. But they also have implications in the poem's deeper structures. Irving is only partly correct when he says that

the Exodus-poem

is the story of a single movement, a mass movement on both physical and spiritual levels. The lack of individualization of characters, which has often been noted in the poem, emphasizes the mass. The people move, are frightened, and rejoice as one. Such stressing of the group, which is in this case a whole race and at its widest extension humanity itself, adds something to the universality of the poet's theme, a universality suggested simply but effectively by the large actions of large masses. 28

As we have already seen, the poem portrays the individuality of Moses with great care; and now, in the journey through the desert, the poem is at pains to set the Israelites apart from the rest of mankind, to distinguish or individualise them not only nationally, but morally and spiritually as well. Putting it another way, we might say that if Moses, being related to an absolute truth in a special way, is an ethical hero, then the Israelites are presented as an ethically heroic nation. 29

The main descriptive images in the account of the exodus to the Red Sea derive from the sea itself. Concerned at its centre with the Israelites as a distinct people, the poem calls them semen (105b), and in this way the poem complicates the theme of separation, for it is only in an unrealistic sense that the Israelites are seamen. The Israelites never actually enter the sea, and even the Crossing is made on the dry floor of the sea (283b). Thus there is clearly not simply a figurative dimension within the poem but one, moreover, that relates to the poem's thematic structure.

²⁸ Ed., p. 29. On p. 7, Irving pertinently remarks: 'The development of the hostility between Egyptians and Hebrews may have been as important in this poet's mind as the careful explanation of the political relationships of Danes, Swedes, and Geats was to the poet of Beowulf.'

²⁹ W. H. Auden, The Enchafed Flood: or The Romantic Iconography of the Sea (London: Faber, 1951), pp. 84-86.

If the dominant application of the marine metaphor is to the theme of separation, then there is another reflection of this theme in the image of the Israelite nation as an exile (Wræcmon, 137b). Homeless (139a) and fugitive, the Israelites are isolated in a vast and foreign land, with dangers lurking on every side. The theme thus becomes even more greatly compound by the evocation of the exodus as the sea-journey of an exile. For, when the pursuing Egyptians are later called 'landmen' (179b), the reference is not merely to the direction from which they are approaching; one is aware of a deliberate contrast between the Israelites as seafarers and the Egyptians as 'þa þe agon lifes wyn gebidene in burgum.' But the image of the Israelites as one man serves also to universalise the reference, for, within the figurative context already established in the poem, the image of an exile sailing the lifweg (104b) would readily suggest to any Anglo-Saxon audience that the Israelites are progressing on the voyage of life (Cross and Tucker, pp. 124-25). And in this way the marine metaphor begins to assume a moral import. Thus, when the exodus is described as a sea-journey (foron flodwege, 106a) through 'black-sea weather' (holmegum wederum, 118b), the Israelite nation is 'thought of as isolated in the midst of the ocean . . . moving through time and struggling with its destiny' (Auden, p. 61).

As long as the purely nautical metaphor continues, the surrounding countryside is, by implication, the desert of the sea. Yet it is not so much that the Israelites are proficient sailors as that the world about them is an ungodly sea which they must brave in order to reach the Promised Land. This point is imaginatively dramatised when God provides the Israelites with a 'ship,' and the description of the protective cloud (lyfthelme beþeaht, 60b) becoming a 'holy net' (74a) and a guiding 'sail' (81b) reveals that God's attitude towards

them is one of gracious care and 'benign masterfulness' (Lucas, p. 300). When, however, the Egyptians cease to be imaged as inhabiting the sea and are called landmen, the distinctive epithets are seen to be a device intended partly to anticipate the inevitable overwhelming of the Egyptians in the Red Sea, and partly to load the theme of separation with a particular spiritual significance. This metaphoric sea:land nomenclature produces a thematic tension which mirrors the poem's central moral conflict: between Godes andsacan (15a), who are a synfullra sweet (497a), and Metodes folc (102b), who are a halige beod (357b). Thus, within the figurative framework of the poem, what can be applied to the Israelites as soldiers crossing the Red Sea holds true as well for the Israelites as sailors crossing the wilderness:

the nature of the righteous manifests itself by a radical separation from the things of the sea. Dryness in the midst of waters is the ultimate in moral excellence, hardly possible except by supreme grace. 30

Moreover, God's exclusive treatment of the Egyptians highlights the paradox inherent in the contrasting characterisation of the two nations. The Egyptians, who are associated with the land, are crushed by the collapsing towers of water, whereas the Israelites, though they are called seamen, can get across the Red Sea marching dryshod over the sea-bed (283b). This discrepancy is, to be sure, another reflection of the theme of separation, but it is more than that. When the Israelites enter the way between the walls of the sea, they become involved in the miraculous creation of a new dimension of reality in which unholiness carries an immediate penalty. The poem intimates this when Reuben's tribe, presumably as atonement for his

³⁰ Jacqueline Covo, 'The Lake of Darkness: Marine Imagery in Relation to Themes of Disruption in Medieval Poetry,' Diss. Brandeis 1967, p. 43.

sin, must forfeit its precedence to the tribe of Judah, whose own righteousness is thus implied. From this spiritual perspective, it becomes clear that the Egyptians cannot tread the holy ground of the sea-bottom and live:

se Mihtiga sloh
mid halige hand, heofonrices Weard,
mid werbeamas, wlanca ðeode.
(NN 485b-87b)

Thus in the Crossing of the Red Sea the thematic tension implied by the marine metaphor is intensified. The miraculous immunity of the Israelites from the destructive power of the sea is wholly appropriate to their earlier identification as sailors under God's command, though all the time they were travelling on land. This moral ambivalence towards the Red Sea is in fact the pivotal thematic crisis in the poem. The Egyptians experience the sea's violence as a natural phenomenon, but their destruction is also the supernatural nemesis of their moral violation of God's holy laws. The two are inseparable for, to the mediaeval mind, the natural world spoke of the supernatural world. The Israelites, on the other hand, march through the sea according to the laws of a new natural order.

(11)

Turning first to the 'interpolated' episodes themselves, one discerns a threefold typological emphasis in the account of the Flood. In the patristic tradition of Christological typology, Noah prefigures Christ as the one who 'inaugurated the new and true covenant'.³¹ In the Exodus-poem, Noah, like Moses, is portrayed as being party to a covenant with God: Noah has on hreðre halige treowa (366). In addition

³¹ Jean Danielou, From Shadows to Reality: Studies in the Biblical Typology of the Fathers, trans. Wulstan Hibberd (London: Burns & Oates, 1960), p. 92.

to this link with the exodus narrative there is a figurative one: Noah's family is implicitly shown to be closely related to the exodus-Israelites when he is described as a wise sæleoda (374a). Like their descendants, Noah and his family pass safely through a sea in which an unrighteous people perish. Here an eschatological typology becomes evident: the Flood foreshadows the drowning of the Egyptians, but at the same time it typifies the judgement of all sinners. But the dominant typology in the episode is that the Flood is also a type of salvation by Christ. As Danielou says, 'the divine action in the Flood is at once a condemnation and a forgiveness' (p. 88). And like Christ, Noah is 'the remnant of Israel' (p. 77), or as the Exodus-poem puts it, an ece lafe (370b), implying that both Noah and Christ are the authors of a new world. Bede emphasises the relation between Noah's survival and its antitypical salvation by analysing Noah's name: 'Noe autem requies interpretatur. Et Dominus dicit in Evangelio: Discite a me quia mi[t]is sum et humilis corde, et inuenietis requiem animabus vestris.'³² The same idea still exists in Aelfric's day:

Noe, þe on ðam arce was on ðam miclum flode, þe ealle woruld adrencte buton þam eahta mannum, ys gereht requies, þæt is "rest" on Englisc; 7 he getacnode Crist, þe for ðy com to us, þæt he us of yðum þissere worulde to reste gebrohte 7 to blisse mid him. 33.

Imbued with patristic commentary, then, the Exodus-poem specifically associates Noah with the notion of survival and renewal (frumcneow gehwas, fæder and moder/ tuddorteondra, 371a-72a; sæda gehwile, 374b).

³² 'Genesis, Capita V-VIII,' In Pentateuchum Commentarii, PL 91.222A.

³³ The Old English Version of the Heptateuch, Aelfric's Treatise on the Old and New Testament and His Preface to Genesis, ed. S. J. Crawford, EETS, OS 160 (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1922), p. 24, ll. 195-203, Laud MS.

Noah is thus a symbol of continuance and a new beginning; he is the first-born of a new humanity living in a new creation (Danielou, pp. 91-92).

Superficially, the covenant theme patently links the Noah episode to the Abraham-Isaac episode. Both God and Abraham have treow (426b and 423a), and in this way the episode is related point-blank through Noah's story to the salvation of the world. Not only that, as Abraham's yrfelaf (403b) and leodum to lafe (405a), Isaac is potentially the first of a new generation. In Rabbinical tradition, Abraham was eminent for his obedience and faith, as Isaac was for his perfect virtue. Recapitulating and extending these features, the Pauline theology of Abraham's sacrifice has a different emphasis, and its Christological typology illuminates aspects of the Abraham-Isaac story which reveal that the poem's direction of interest in the episode is towards lineage and holiness (Danielou, pp. 117-23).

For the Church Fathers, no person in the Old Testament was more readily typical of Christ than Abraham's son, Isaac. Tertullian makes the important connection: 'Isaac, cum a patre hostia duceretur lignumque ipse sibi portans, Christi exitum iam tunc denotabat in victimam concessi a patre et lignum passionis suae baiulantis.'³⁴ Augustine reiterates the orthodoxy of this exegetical equation between Isaac and Christ: 'Quis alius in Isaac lignum sibi portabat ad victimam, nisi qui crucem sibi ad passionem ipse portabat?'³⁵ And Aelfric emphasises the traditional ecclesiastic ideas attendant on

³⁴ 'Isaac, when he was being led by his father as a sacrificial victim, carrying the wood himself, was already specifying the death of Christ, who was permitted by his Father to be a victim and to carry the heavy wood of his own suffering.' Adversus Iudaeos, Ch. 10.6, CL 2.1376; translation mine.

³⁵ Contra Faustum Manichaeum, Bk 12.25, PL 42.267-68. Cf. his In Iohannis Evangelium Tractatus CXXIV, Trac. 9.12, CL 36.97.

this episode: 'Abraham, þe wolde Isaac geoffrian be Godes hæse,
 hæfde getacnunge þæs heofonlican Fæder, þe his Sunu asende to cwale
 for us, 7 Isaac getacnode þone Færend Crist, ðe acweald wæs for us.'³⁶
 Yet the Exodus-poem eschews the image of Isaac carrying the wood to
 his own sacrifice, clearly indicating that the poetic emphasis in
 the Abraham-Isaac episode is not on Isaac as sacrificial victim. In
 the episode, there is, rather, a triple focus: on Abraham's actions
 and attitudes as Isaac's father, on God's promise to Abraham of more
 children, and on the holiness and might of Israel, which is in fact
 the fulfilment of that promise. Actually, these ideas are the issue
 of the central point of the earlier transitional passage between the
 exodus narrative and the story of Noah:

Him wæs an fæder;
 leof leodfruma landriht gebah,
 frod on ferhðe, freomagum leof.
 Cende cneowsibbe cenra manna
 heahfædera sum, halige þeode,
 Israēla cyn, onriht Godes,
 swa þæt orþancum ealde reccað,
 þa þe wægburge mæst gefrunon,
 frumcyn feora, fæderaðelo gehwæs.
 (353b-61b)

Augustine fully absorbs the Pauline exegetical identity contained in
 the Letter to the Galatians (3.16): '[fiunt] fideles Gentes filii
 Abrahæ in semine Abrahæ, quod est Christus.'³⁷ In other words,
 the poem is underscoring the means of salvation for the Gentiles,
 since it is only in virtue of their imitation of Abraham's fæste
treowe (423a) that 'omnes fideles omnium gentium filii eius futuri

³⁶ The Old English Version of the Heptateuch . . ., p. 26,
 ll. 263-69, Laud MS.

³⁷ 'believing Gentiles [become] children of Abraham, "in
 Abraham's seed, which is Christ."' De Spiritu et Littera, Ch.
 26.46, PL 44.229; trans. Peter Holmes, The Anti-Pelagian Works
of Saint Augustine, The Works of Aurelius Augustine, No. 4, I
 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1908), 203.

dicerentur.³⁸ Not surprisingly, in the 'interpolated' section the poem concentrates on holiness. Numerous phrases and images related directly to holiness occur: halige treowa (366b), halige heapas (382a), Haliges hæssum (385a), halige heahtreowe (388a), tempel Gode (391b), alh haligne (392a), heahst and haligost (394a), and halig tiber (416a). This characterising pattern of imagery helps to define the context of what nevertheless remains the central event of the Abraham-Isaac episode, namely, the sacrifice itself. Typologically speaking, then, the Exodus-poem presents, through the sacrifice, the regenerative power of Christ's holy blood for those who have faith.

Indeed, the emphasis in the Noah-Abraham episodes seems to be less on Noah and Isaac as types of Christ than on the events of the Flood and the Sacrifice themselves, their sacramental typology. For instance, both the Flood and the Sacrifice may be considered as types of baptism. The connection between the Flood and the sacrament of Baptism not only has a solid Scriptural basis (1 Peter 3.20-21), but, as Danielou's full discussion shows (pp. 85-102), is a patristic commonplace. Tertullian refers to it--'post aquas diluvii quibus iniquitas antiqua purgata est, post baptismum ut ita dixerim mundi'³⁹--so does Augustine and Isidore. The most important theological aspect of the sacrificial typology is the presence of the sacramental principle of baptism in the Crucifixion. Again, there is Scriptural

³⁸ 'all the faithful of all nations might be called his children in the future.' De Catechizandis Rudibus, Ch. 19.33.11, CL 46.157; trans. S. D. Salmond, On Catechising; On Faith and the Creed, The Works of Aurelius Augustine, No. 9 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1892), p. 312.

³⁹ 'after the waters of the flood, whereby the former iniquity was purged, after the baptism (so to speak) of the world.' De Baptismo, Ch. 8.4, CL 1.283; trans. C. Dodgson, Apologetic and Practical Treatises, A Library of Fathers, No. 10 (Oxford: Parker, 1842), p. 265.

foundation for this typological association: 'An ignoratis quia quicumque baptizati sumus in Christo Iesu, in morte ipsius baptizati sumus?' (Romans 6.3). Ambrose develops this idea for catechumens:

quicumque baptizatur, in morte Jesu baptizatur.
 Quid est in morte? Ut quomodo Christus mortuus est,
 sic et tu mortem degustes: quomodo Christus mortuus
 est peccato, et Deo vivit; ita et tu superioribus
 illecebris peccatorum mortuus sis per baptismatis
 sacramentum, et surrexeris per gratiam Christi.
 Mors ergo est, sed non in mortis corporalis veritate,
 sed in similitudine; cum enim mergis, mortis sus-
 cipis et sepulturae similitudinem 40

As early as the time of Tertullian, in fact, baptism is associated with Easter which, in the early Church, commemorates both the Crucifixion and the Resurrection, for in baptism, 'an "antitype" of the Passion and the Resurrection,' candidates die and rise with Christ.⁴¹

A final baptismal typology appears in the Abraham-episode when the Heavenly Voice, echoing the opening of the poem, insists on the two kinds of creation, natural and spiritual:

'Ne behwylfan mæg heofon and eorðe
 His wuldres word, widdra and siddra
 þonne befaðman mæge foldan sceattas,
 eorðan ymbhwyrft and uproðor, 430

40

Whoever is baptized, is baptized in the death of Jesus. What does this mean: 'in the death'? That, as Christ died, you also must taste death: as Christ died to sin and lives for God, so you also must die to the past pleasures of sin by the sacrament of Baptism, and rise again by the grace of Christ. This, then, is a death, but not in the reality of physical death, but in a likeness. When you plunge into the water, you receive the likeness of death and burial.

De Sacramentis, Bk 2.7.23, PL 16.430B; trans. Jean Danielou, The Bible and the Liturgy, Liturgical Studies, Vol. 3 (Notre Dame, Ind.: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1956), p. 45.

⁴¹ Danielou, *ibid.*; A. H. Couratin, 'Liturgy,' in Historical Theology, by J. Danielou, A. H. Couratin, and John Kent, The Pelican Guide to Modern Theology, Vol. 2 (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969), pp. 157-58.

garsecges gin and þeos geomre lyft.
 Þe að swereð engla þeoden,
 wyrda Waldend and wereda God,
 soðfæst sigora, þurh His sylfes lif, 435
 þæt þines cynnes and cneowmaga,
 randwiggendra, rim ne cunnon
 ylðo ofer eorðan ealle cræfte
 to gesecgenne soðum wordum,
 nymðe hwylc þæs snottor in sefan weorðe
 þæt he ana mæge ealle geriman 440
 stanas on eorðan, steorran on heofonum,
 sæbeorga sand, sealte yða'

The Creation saw life produced from the primordial waters which covered the deep (garsecges gin). As antitype of the first creation, baptism is therefore the second great creative act of God. Danielou outlines the cosmic and spiritual ramifications of this aspect of baptism:

The Incarnation is the creation of the new universe; and it is this creation which is continued in present history and takes place in Baptism. It is truly a new creation, "regeneration" according to the word used in the Gospel of St. John (III, 5). And St. Paul calls the newly baptized a "new creature" (II Cor. 5, 17), and this re-creation is accomplished in the baptismal waters (John III, 5). 42

The complex of baptismal typologies in the Noah-Abraham episodes, then, supplies the thematic rationale of their juxtaposition in the Exodus-poem. Once the figurative dimension has been established within the episodes, it becomes easier to relate their themes to the main narrative of the poem for their traditional typological notations take on the energies of poetry. And this emphasis on baptismal typology is justified all the more by the ecclesiastical tradition that the Crossing of the Red Sea is the pre-eminent type of Christian baptism.⁴³ The explication used in the following passage from

⁴² The Bible and the Liturgy, p. 72.

⁴³ Danielou, From Shadows to Reality, p. 175. Earl accepts these poetic connections without reservation (p. 543), but despairs of isolating 'a single coherent tradition' which will relate

Augustine is representative of the traditional patristic exegesis of the event:

Ita quemadmodum per diluvium aquis terra purgata est a nequitia peccatorum, qui tunc in illa inundatione deleti sunt, et iusti evaserunt per lignum: sic ex Aegypto exiens populus dei, per aquas iter invenit, quibus ipsorum hostes consumpti sunt. Nec ibi defuit ligni sacramentum. Nam virga percussit Moyses, ut illud miraculum fieret. Utrumque signum est sancti baptismi, per quod fideles in novam vitam transeunt, peccata vero eorum tamquam inimici delentur atque moriuntur. 44

clearly the Crossing and the digressive episodes (p. 563). But, by juxtaposing these two spheres of historical experience in a metaphoric structure, the poem succeeds in making the point that mankind is living Sub gratia, as Aelfric calls the third age of the world, the first two ages being Ante legem and Sub lege (The Homilies of the Anglo-Saxon Church, II, 191). Augustine, in his Enchiridion, mentions these as stages in the Christian life, and names a fourth stage, in pace plena atque perfecta (Ch. 31.118, CL 46.112), which extends beyond death to the resurrection of the body. This traditional patristic chronology provides a simple basis for associating the various Biblical personages in the Exodus-poem, and helps to reinforce the poem's baptismal significance inasmuch as the sacrament is an act of God's grace. Put simply: Noah represents the time before the law; Moses the time under the law; Abraham the time under grace; and Solomon (sunu Dauides, 389b) the time of perfect peace. Accepting, then, the baptismal typology already pointed out in the poem, one might say that the Temple symbolises the Resurrected body of Christ and hence the Church, which is made up of all the baptised. Within this spiritual chronology, the figure of Isaac becomes the recapitulatory focus: 'Recte igitur significat Isaac, per repromissionem natus, filios gratiae, cives civitatis liberae, socios pacis aeternae.' ('Isaac, therefore, son of the promise, is rightly regarded as a symbol of the children of grace, citizens of the free city and partners in eternal peace.' Augustine, The City of God against the Pagans, Bk 15.3, trans. Philip Levine, LCL, IV, 1966, 422 and 423.) For a similar chronology, see Hugh of St Victor, De Sacramentis Christianae Fidei, Bk 2.6.8, 'De sacramentis neophytorum,' PL 176.454D-55A.

44 Thus, then, just as the earth through the agency of the flood was cleansed by the waters from the wickedness of the sinners, who in those times were destroyed in that inundation, while the righteous escaped by means of the wood; so the people of God, when they went forth from Egypt, found a way through the waters by which their enemies were devoured. Nor was the sacrament of the wood wanting there. For Moses smote with his rod, in order that that miracle might be

A description of the Crossing of the Red Sea had much with which to tempt the Exodus-poet, and its susceptibility of typological interpretation makes it a thematic climax in the poem. The baptismal significance of the Crossing thus opens up a typological dimension in the main narrative of the poem.

In fact, it is only as we examine the poem's marine continuities in the context of the Noah-Abraham episodes that we can appreciate the fullness of the metaphoric resonance of the Crossing of the Red Sea. To begin with, the covenant theme is reinforced and modified. Noah is the righteous founder of a new race, and it is his haligu treow which ensures the safe convoy of the favoured cargo. Similarly, the Israelites are treated like maðmhorda mast (368a) when they make their crossing, while the devastation of the Flood, which the poem leaves us to imagine for ourselves in the Noah episode, is described in miniature in the sea's destruction of the Egyptian forces. On the other hand, Isaac's last-minute remission parallels the Israelites' hasty escape; and, as the tribes march through the sea--cynn æfter cynne (351a)--so the poem reminds us of the passing generations of Israelites, and of God's promise to Abraham through whose fæste treowe Isaac is the first-born of a new nation, initiating a halige beode,/ Israela cyn, onriht Godes (357b-58b).⁴⁵ Yet a far more

effected. Both these are signs of holy baptism, by which the faithful pass into the new life, while their sins are done away with like enemies, and perish.

De Catechizandis Rudibus, Ch. 20.34.2-3, CL 46.158-59; trans. Salmond, p. 313.

⁴⁵ I am by no means the first person to see this theme of national destiny in Exodus, but I hope to go much farther than my predecessors in relating it to the poem's larger structure. Bright, for instance, sees the poem's themes as 'national faith and destiny,' the constituents of 'the supreme theme for epic treatment' (p. 99, col. 1), and as 'the national destiny of a

important theme emerges when we consider the metaphoric function of the sea passage in the more comprehensive context of its baptismal typology.

Central to the theology of baptism is the paradox of life-in-death. Danielou implies this when he says, 'Baptism is a judgment which destroys man the sinner: but, because of the death of Christ, when sin has been destroyed, Baptism brings forth the new man' (The Bible and the Liturgy, p. 163). Here Danielou is sketching the analogous relationship between the destructive effect of the Flood and that of the Passover as types of baptism. We have already seen how, first in the theotechnic and then in the theomorphic Red Sea, both of these acts of God are recalled. Like all three of these, baptism both destroys and creates: it both drowns and cleanses (like the Flood); it both takes life and gives it (like the Passover); and it both vanquishes and ennobles (like the Red Sea). As Chrysostom succinctly puts it: 'in mari Rubro demersi sunt Aegyptii, ascenderunt et pervaserunt Israelitae. Res eadem alium quidem sepelit, alium vero generat.'⁴⁶

Notions of military conflict easily fit into the Exodus-poem's

people that relies steadfastly on Deity,--the reward of faith in the God of the nation' (p. 102, col. 2). See, too, Gollancz, p. lxxviii, esp. n. 2. Alvin A. Lee, The Guest-Hall of Eden: Four Essays on the Design of Old English Poetry (New Haven and London: Yale Univ. Press, 1972), puts it succinctly: 'Exodus explores . . . the symbolic meaning of "Israel"' (p. 41). Irving draws attention to the frequency of werod and folc, but only in order to illustrate the deficiency of vocabulary and variation as a stylistic feature of the poem (ed., p. 33). He does not notice the thematic significance of this predominance. Similarly, observe the poem's use of leod, peod, and their compounds.

⁴⁶ 'in the Red Sea the Egyptians were sunk beneath it, but the Israelites went up from out of it; and the same act buries the one, generates the other.' In Epistolam ad Colossenses, Hom. 7.2, PG 33.346; trans. [J. Ashworth], The Homilies of S. John Chrysostom, A Library of Fathers, No. 14 (Oxford: Parker, 1843), pp. 260-61.

historical and typological strategies, since the poem applies 'the conventional Christian equation of baptism with exodus and its interpretation in terms of warfare.'⁴⁷ It would require no great familiarity with patristic exegesis for an audience to have in mind the typological identification of Tertullian, for example:

cum populus de Aegypto libere expeditus vim regis
Aegypti per aquam transgressus evadit, ipsum regem
cum totis copiis aqua extinguit. Quae figura
manifestior in baptismi sacramento? Liberantur de
saeculo nationes, per aquam scilicet, et diabolum
dominatorem pristinum in aqua obpressum derelinquunt. 48

By the fifth century this interpretation of the Red Sea Crossing forms part of orthodox dogma (Cross and Tucker, pp. 122-23). Bede perpetuates the whole typological scheme, and we get it again, fully absorbed and processed, in Aelfric's famous Midlent-Sunday sermon:

Þæt Egypta-land hæfde getacnunge þyssere worulde,
and Pharao getacnode þone ðwyran deofol, þe symle
Godes gecorenum ehtnysse on basett on andwardum
life. Swa swa se Elmihtiga God ða his folc ahredde
wið þone cyning Pharao, and hi lædde to ðam earde
þe he Abrahame and his ofspringe behet, swa eac he
arett dæghwomlice his gecorenan wið þone ealdan
deofol, and hi alyst fram his ðeowte, and fram
ðyssere geswincfullan worulde, and gelæt hi to
ðam ecan sðele ðe we to gesceapene wæron. Seo
Reade sæ hæfde getacnunge ures fulluhtes, on ðære
adranc Pharao and his here samod; swa eac on urum
gastlicum fulluhte bið se deofol forsmorod fram us,
and ealle ure synna beoð adylegode, and we ðonne
sigefæste, mid geleafan Godes lof singað, anbidi-
gende mid geðylde þæs ecan eðeles. (Op. cit., II, 200)

⁴⁷ D. H. Green, 'Old English "Dryht": A New Suggestion,'
MLR, 63, No. 2 (1968), 402.

⁴⁸ when the people being at large and set free from Egypt, escaped the violence of the king of Egypt by passing over the water, the water utterly destroyed the king with all his armies. What figure more manifest in the Sacrament of Baptism? The nations are delivered from the world, to wit by water, and leave the devil, their former master, overwhelmed in the water.

This identity between Pharaoh and Satan appears in the writings of Augustine and Gregory, where it is extended to include a struggle not only against Satan but against past sins as well. Once these various correspondences have been traced, the line to follow in a discussion of the poem's baptismal typology becomes clear, for it would appear that Aelfric and the Exodus-poet drew on the same exegetical and ecclesiastical traditions.

The two explicit references to hell in the poem connect several thematic points and suggest others. In the first reference (helle, 46a), Pharaoh is said to have been robbed (bereafod, 45b) when the Egyptians released the Israelites from captivity.⁴⁹ The mention of hell in this context would suggest to any informed audience the similarity between this rescue of the Israelites and Christ's deliverance of their patriarchs and prophets from Satan's stronghold. Moreover, the idea is sound doctrine based on Scripture (Ephesians 4.8-10, 1 Peter 2.14-16, and Hebrews 3.18-20). As the leader of the Egyptians, who are Godes andsacan and later called feondas (64a), Pharaoh is readily identifiable typologically with Satan. God's participation in the release is probably either merely implicit or obliquely referred to in the phrase Heofon bider becom (46b), which, describing God's intervention in Egypt to free the Israelites, typifies Christ's descent into hell to deliver the patriarchs and prophets.⁵⁰ The

⁴⁹ In his ed., Irving keeps the MS reading freond, but the generally accepted emendation is feond. See Wrenn's rev. of Irving's ed., p. 187. Irving reverts to feond in NN, conceding that it 'is probably better, in view of the Pharaoh-Satan theme' (p. 294).

⁵⁰ Heofon is the MS reading. The strongest competing emendation is heofung 'lamentation' (Krapp, ASPR, I; Wrenn loc. cit.; Dobbie, rev. of Irving's ed., JEGP, 53, No. 2, 1954, 230). Irving stands by the transmitted text (NN, p. 295).

absence of any direct mention of Christ in the poem need not trouble us: for one thing, an Anglo-Saxon audience would not expect a consistent, one-to-one figural correspondence so long as the poem presented an intelligible typology, as there is in the liturgy, for instance. Anyway, both Scriptural and patristic tradition recognise in the figure of Moses a type of Christ, not only as guide but also as preacher to those in hell.⁵¹

Indeed, the second reference to hell in the poem (536b-38a), which issues from the mouth of Moses immediately after the drowning of the Egyptians, emphasises eternal torment and confinement, fyr and ece scraef, which give the speech the distinctive tone of an admonition appropriate to Christ. In addition, Psalm 106 in the Paris Psalter speaks of the Israelites' release from Egypt in phrases identical with those in the Anglo-Saxon legends of Christ's Harrowing of Hell.⁵² As Danielou says, 'the Descent into hell is the central episode in the redemption, the victory won by Christ over death in its own domain' (The Bible and the Liturgy, p. 95). Finally, Gregory completes the sketch by explicitly associating the Descent into hell with the Crossing of the Red Sea:

Quod profundum maris Dominus petiit, cum inferni
novissima, electorum suorum animas erepturus,
intravit. Unde et per prophetam dicitur: Posuisti
profundum maris viam, ut transirent liberati.
. . . Quod tamen profundum viam Dominus posuit,
quia illuc veniens, electos suos a claustris

⁵¹ 1 Corinthians 10.4; Danielou, The Bible and the Liturgy, pp. 95-96, and From Shadows to Reality, p. 159; Daniel G. Calder, 'Symbolic Settings in Old English Poetry,' Diss. Indiana 1969, pp. 134-35; Earl, pp. 544-47; Irving, NN, p. 290.

⁵² Rhea T. Workman, 'The Concept of Hell in Anglo-Saxon Poetry before A.D. 850,' Diss. South Carolina 1958, pp. 273, 266-67; the Blickling homily for Easter Day, The Blickling Homilies of the Tenth Century, ed. R. Morris, EETS, OS 73 (London: Trübner, 1880), No. 7, pp. 82-88.

infernī ad coelestia transire concessit. 53

Thus the central significance in the exodus of the Israelites is seen to be the cosmic dimensions of God's triumph over Satan, which has its most vital effect in the redemptive power of baptism, which sacramentally imitates Christ's Descent into hell (Danielou, The Bible and the Liturgy, p. 78). The Israelites are liberated and led through the sea to the Promised Land; they are, in a sense, re-created, for they emerge from the sea as a new and holy nation.⁵⁴ In terms of the cosmic struggle they are the spiritual nation of Christ's elect, for the baptised Christian participates in the death, harrowing, and new life of his Saviour.

These typological connections lead us straight to the thematic metaphor in the Exodus-poem: the naturalising process of baptism, in the regenerative sense that Christians are a new people, citizens of another country, and no longer serving an earthly master. Chrysostom's explication of baptism conveniently conflates the two architectonic continuities in the poem--the martial and the national--when he calls the newly baptised 'novos Christi milites. . . . qui hodie hac nocte

53 But the Lord sought this depth of the sea, when He entered the lowest parts of the pit, in order to rescue the souls of His Elect. Whence also it is said by the Prophet, Thou hast made the depths of the sea a way, for the ransomed to pass over. . . . But the Lord made this depth a way, because He, by coming thither, granted His Elect to pass over from the bars of the pit to heavenly places.

Moralium Libri, Bk 29.12.23, PL 76.489C-D; trans. [James Bliss], Morals on the Book of Job, A Library of Fathers, No. 23, III (Oxford: Parker, 1847), 317.

54 Danielou, From Shadows to Reality, p. 164. In another sense, the Crossing of the Red Sea is not merely the beginning of salvation but salvation itself, just as the deliverance from Egypt is a salvation. The Crossing is, in fact, as Earl puts it, 'a miniature version of the whole exodus' (p. 554).

in superna Jerusalem cives adscripti [sunt].⁵⁵ Since allegory is not a characteristic of Chrysostom's literal and grammatical style, we can feel reasonably sure that this is common ecclesiastic tradition (Harkins, p. 6). In point of fact, both Augustine and Gregory describe the pursuing enemies (i.e., the Egyptians) as well as those awaiting the Israelites in the desert as the sins and the temptations that face the catechumen after baptism (Cross and Tucker, p. 126). Hence it is the attitude of Christians to the world that is typologically represented by the tribe of Judah advancing in close combat over the grenne grund of the sea to the Promised Land, and the un-Scriptural typological details employed in this supposedly gratuitous image (323a-30b) symbolise the spiritual conflict on the earthly journey to heaven.⁵⁶ Once again, Aelfric provides an interesting gloss on these martial and national themes:

To ðam earde we wæron gesceapene, ac we hit forwyrhton.
Nu næbbe we hit næfre, buton we hit eft gewinnon
mid gastlicum gecampe ðurh Godes fultum, swa swa

⁵⁵ 'new soldiers of Christ. . . . who this day in the course of the night were enrolled as citizens in the heavenly Jerusalem.' In Sanctum Pascha, par. 5, PG 28.770-71; trans. Paul W. Harkins, St. John Chrysostom: Baptismal Instructions, Ancient Christian Writers, No. 31 (Westminster, Md: Newman Press, 1963), p. 247. In a recently discovered MS containing fuller instructions by Chrysostom on baptism, there is the same conception of neophytes: 'the new soldiers of Christ, who have this day been inscribed on the citizen lists of heaven' (Harkins, p. 68).

⁵⁶ But see Hugh T. Keenan, 'Exodus 312: "The Green Street of Paradise,"' NM, 71, No. 3 (1970), 459. Augustine establishes the relevant typological equations when he calls Israel 'domus Juda propter Christum, qui venit ex tribu Juda. Domus filiorum promissionis haec est, non operum propriorum, sed beneficii Dei.' ('the house of Judah, on account of Christ, who came of the tribe of Judah. This is the house of the children of promise,--not by reason of their own merits, but of the kindness of God.' De Spiritu et Littera, Ch. 24.40, PL 44.224; trans. Holmes, p. 195.) Similarly, Isidore: 'Judas significat Christum' (Allegoriae Quaedam Sacrae Scripturae, No. 38, PL 83.106A, quoted by Irving, NN, p. 311, n. 31Off.). Cf. Greenfield, A Critical History of Old English Literature, p. 158.

Israhel ðone eard gewann ðe Abrahame ær behaten
wæs. (Op. cit., II, 222)

The historical events in the Exodus-poem subtly concretise the overriding theme of Christian nationality. The context of typological exegesis links the Noah-Abraham episodes to the exodus narrative in such a way that the two spheres of historical experience fuse and cohere through their mutual thematic interest in eschatological, Christological, and sacramental typology. Seen within the thematic context of the whole Exodus-poem, the Noah-Abraham episodes relate baptism to God's redemptive creation of a spiritual Israel. The complex of ideas outlined by Augustine in the following passage is readily suggested by the poem as a whole:

Sicut ergo lex factorum scripta in tabulis lapideis,
mercesque ejus terra illa promissionis, quam carnalis
domus Israel cum ex Aegypto liberata esset, accepit,
pertinet ad Testamentum Vetus: ita lex fidei scripta
in cordibus, mercesque ejus species contemplationis,
quam spiritualis domus Israel ab hoc mundo liberata
percipiet, pertinet ad Testamentum Novum. 57

The Israelites' moral distinctiveness, which we saw earlier reflected figuratively in the sea:land axis, assumes a new significance in relation to the baptismal typology of the poem. As a body of human beings the Israelite nation is a 'ship' isolated in the midst of the 'sea,' struggling with its political destiny; at the same time, as sæmen, the Israelites sail a ship that, since it is

57

As then the law of works, which was written on the tables of stone, and its recompense, the land of promise, which the house of the carnal Israel after their liberation from Egypt received, belonged to the old testament, so the law of faith, written on the heart, and its reward, the beatific vision which the house of the spiritual Israel, when delivered from the present world, shall perceive, belong to the new testament.

piloted by the Holy Spirit (96b), is equatable with Noah's Ark and the Church (see Earl, pp. 561-63). Thus, through the insertion of the episodes into the description of the Crossing of the Red Sea, the poem offers a climactic reinterpretation of the central thematic paradox in the national identity of the Israelites--though they are called seamen, they make their crossing on land--for, in its destructiveness and its creativeness, the Red Sea is the agency of both the judgement and the mercy of God, the paradox which is also at the heart of the sacrament of Baptism.

(111)

In the poem, the Crossing of the Red Sea is flanked by two speeches made by Moses and is interrupted by the two 'interpolated' episodes. This separation of the Israelite crossing and the Egyptian debacle is a deliberate structural manoeuvre and consists with the theme of distinction outlined earlier. If we turn first to the description of the Israelite crossing (299a-353a), we notice that this theme is developed a little further. The Israelites themselves are divided into their different tribes, and the tribe of Judah is given precedence, fearlessly treading the unknown road alone, presumably following Moses. I have already mentioned Judah's primacy due to his righteousness, and here, through the radiantly colourful imagery --haswe herestræta (284a), fage feldas (287a), reade streamas (296a), hwite linde (301b) grenne grund (312a), gyldenne leon (321b)--the tribe of Judah is distinguished by its royalty and bravery.

Within the context of Moses' exhortatory speech which leads up to the actual crossing, this nobility of Judah becomes connected with the laws of Nature. For the duration of the passage of the tribes of Israel through the Red Sea, the sea is given an architect-

tural structure:

'Yð up færeð, ofstum wyrceð
 wæter to wealfæsten. . . .
 nu se Agend up arærde
 reade streamas in randgebeorh.
 Syndon þa foreweallas fægre gesteppe,
 wrætlicu wægiaru, oð wolcna hrof.'
 (NN 282a-83a, 295a-98b)

The wrætlicu wægiaru 'the wondrous road between the waves' suggests an unimaginably splendid way through the sea. There are tawny pavings and dazzling plains as old as Creation itself (284a-88b), and this 'ornamented' thoroughfare becomes a royal highway when the tribe of Judah steps on it.⁵⁸ The road has been miraculously constructed by God Himself, though here it is through the agency of Moses' rod that the Israelites are granted an escape-route, and the point is made that God fulfils His promises through men who are holy and who have faith (252a-75b). Also, we are reminded of Moses' wrætlicu wordriht 'wondrous law' of which we heard in the very opening lines of the poem. Only Moses can fully appreciate the physical implications of the miracle and the lengths to which God has gone to effect it, for Moses knows the story of the Creation,⁵⁹ including the natural laws

⁵⁸ Interestingly, in one of his letters, Jerome speaks of 'Rubri Maris pretiosissima grana' 'the costliest Red Sea pearls' (Select Letters of St. Jerome, trans. F. A. Wright, LCL, 1933, pp. 444 and 445).

⁵⁹ For Augustine, the opening lines of the Book of Genesis hid truths that only Moses could explain. If Moses were alive today, he says emphatically, 'tenerem eum et rogarem eum et per te obsecrarem, ut mihi ista panderet, et praeberem aures corporis mei sonis erumpentibus ex ore eius' ('I would lay hold of him and in your name I would beg and beseech him to explain those words to me. I would be all ears to catch the sounds that fell from his lips.' Confessiones, Bk 11.3.5, ed. Martin Skutella, Bibliotheca Scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana, rev. ed. Heiko Jürgens and Wiebke Schaub, 1934; Stuttgart: B. G. Teubner, 1969, p. 267, ll. 3-6; trans. R. S. Pine-Coffin, Saint Augustine: Confessions, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1961, p. 256.)

governing the sea. For this reason Moses emphasises not only the power but also the creativity of God who is Liffrea (271a) and frumsceafta Frea (274a). The images in the first three verbs in the following quotation define his attitude to this transmutation:

'Sælde sægrundas suðwind fornam,
 bæðweges blæst; brim is areafod,
 sand sæcir spaw. Ic wat soð gere
 þæt eow mihtig God miltse gecyðde'
 (289a-92b)

To paraphrase in modern English: 'The south wind, blowing over the calm waves, has destroyed the security of the sea-bed; the ocean is ransacked, the churning sea has belched its sand. You little realise how merciful God has been to you.' In other words, God the Creator saves the people dearest to Him by making a new creation in which they actively participate, subject no longer to the ordinary laws of Nature. Two thematic generalities issue from interpreting the first part of the sea passage as a metaphoric vehicle: one, released from brutal bondage, the Israelites walk the surface of the earth as a newly created nation; and two, so long as the Israelites have an heroic and holy leader, they will have God's miraculous mercy at their disposal, and will, so to speak, never again be geheged (169a, MS) 'hemmed in.'

Turning now to the Egyptians' abortive crossing, we see that, by contrast, they are portrayed trapped in the middle of the sea, where they perish:

herges to hame,	ne ðær enig becwom
wyrd mid wege	ac hie hindan beleac
fæste gefeterod,	mægen wæs on cwealme
searwum asæled. . . .	forðgange neh,
fæste befarene	Sawlum lunnon
	(NN 456b-58a, NN 469b-71a, 497b-98a)

Again, by contrast with the radiance of the Israelites' crossing, darkness encircles the Egyptians and aggravates their predicament:

wælmist astah (451b), Him ongen genap (455b), lyft up geswearc (462b).

Finally, whereas earlier the fugitive Israelites had been appalled by the sight of their approaching pursuers, it is the Egyptians who are now in a state of panic. And the whole picture is meant both to contrast very strongly with the earlier scene of the Egyptians in their martial pride and splendour, and to recall how their first attack on the Israelites was thwarted:

feond was anmod,
werud was wigblac, oððæt wlanca forsceaf
mihtig engel, se ða menigeo beheold,
þæt þær gelaðe mid him leng ne mihton
geseon tosomne. Sið was gedæled.
(203b-07b)

Prompted by the pride of the Egyptians, God enters the struggle through the action of an angel. It is not surprising, then, that the sea is given the qualities of a warrior angel: it is 'brave' (modig, 469a), a 'naked messenger of distress' (nacud nydboda, 475a), and a 'hostile battle-spirit' (fah feðegast, 476a). Thus the sea plays a supernatural role in the destruction of the Egyptian army. This identification of the sea as an angel has some important thematic consequences. First, the theme of lineage and descent is varied by the deaths of the Egyptian warriors, among whom are leoda dugoð (183b), cyningas (185a), and æðelum deore (186b), whose progenitive importance the poem emphasises (wæpnedcynnes, 188a). The sea's attack is on the whole Egyptian nation, just as another angel had passed through Egypt killing the first-born children. Deliberately, the poem links the two actions by means of the poignant half-line 'the fall of treasured warriors' (hordwearda hryre, 35a and 512a). God cuts off the Egyptian royal line and the threat of national extinction hovers over Egypt. Then, through ambiguity and implied predication, the final apotheosis of the sea brings out the underlying moral conflict:

se ðe sped ahte
ageat gylp wera. Hie wið God wunnon!
(514b-15b)

Here se can refer either to the sea itself or to God (see Irving, ed., pp. 95-96). Strong contrast is achieved in the second line through the syntactic disjunction and through the lexical polarity of ageat and wunnon. The chiasitic arrangement of these verbs has the effect of irony since their conceptual subjects are in opposing half-lines. The Egyptians are, of course, the grammatical subject of wunnon, but they have only pronominal status (Hie), and the main contrast is between their human presumptuousness and God's power.

But the enmity between God and the Egyptians springs not merely from their pride but from their unholiness as well; for example, they worship false gods (47a). The Egyptians do not participate in the same moral system as the Israelites, therefore they cannot enter on the same road as the Israelites, and this disparity between the moral worlds of the two nations is synaesthetically depicted in the spectacular dissolution of the divinely constructed sea-way:

Flod fangode, fæge crungon,
lagu land gefeol, lyft wæs onhrered;
wicon weallfæsten, wægas burston,
multon meretorras, þa se Mihtiga sloh
mid halige hand, heofonrices Weard,
mid werbeamas, wlance ðeode.
(NN 482a-87b)

Amid this physical debacle, a spiritual drama takes place between a holy God and an unholy people. 'Towers' are what 'melt,' the buildings that have furthest to fall, aspiring heavenwards; also, the the Roman structures illustrated in the Junius MS impose an oxymoronic texture on meretorras. For instance, there happens to be an illustration of the Babel story on p. 82 of the manuscript, showing the stiðlic stantorr (Genesis, ASPR, I, 1700a), while here the towers dissolve because their columns (beamas) are made of water (wer),

symbolising perhaps the transparent and yielding pride of the Egyptians. More to the point, when we see the Egyptians in a panic we begin to realise the sinfulness of their pride. The horror of God's wrath can be heard in their screams (462a, 490a). The Egyptians' fear is judged more vivid because it can thus be understood in terms of both their own pride, which they displayed before the crossing, and the pride of those who built the Tower of Babel ('for wience,' Genesis 1673a). The Egyptians' fear makes plausible the hyperbolic imagery. We conceive the towers melting as we conceive the sea's liquidity, not merely because we see it 'foam' (famgode) but because, on account of its liquidity, we see the 'glistening' (flodblac, 498b) backs of the Egyptian dead. In this particular context, it is possible that fæge 'the doomed' has the supplementary meaning, aurally suggested, of fæge 'the stained or sinful.' In any event, the metaphysical quality ascribed to the Egyptians includes a spiritual meaning, so that the full impact of ece staðulas (474b) now comes across: the drowned Egyptians are doomed to the sea-bottom for ever. Thus, viewing the second part of the description of the Crossing of the Red Sea as a metaphoric vehicle leads to the concept of spiritual laws which are inherent in the physical universe, and which have moral implications and eternal consequences. The maintenance of spiritual order, i.e., righteousness, in the world involves God in a struggle with mortal enemies who are merely soldiers of Satan, but who nevertheless eventually meet the same fate as he does:

Witrod gefeol
 heah of heofonum handweorc Godes,
 famigbōsma, flodweard gesloh
 unhleowan wæg alde mece,
 þæt ðy deaðdrepe drihte swæfon,
 synfullra sweet. Sawlum lunnon
 fæste befarene, flodblac here,
 siððan hie on bogum brun yppinge
 modewæga mæst. Mægen eall gedreas,
 ða he gedrecte dugoð Egypta,

Faraon mid his folcum. He onfond hraðe,
 siððan grund gestah, Godes andsaca,
 þæt wæs mihtigra mereflodes Weard;
 wolde heorufæðmum hilde gesceadan,
 yrre and egesfull. (NN 492b-506a)

The most striking things about these lines are their tone and momentum: a glorification of a cosmic paradox, they celebrate the destructive energies of God the Creator; moreover, because the destruction is God's 'handiwork' it is necessarily hallowed since His hand itself is holy (486a). In these lines we get a vision of a human disaster conceived as a supernatural accomplishment, made at once terrifying and chastening by its expression in terms of the magnificent Creator who 'þas woruld worhte . . . / eorðan ymbhwyrft and uprodor, / gesette sigerice' (25a-27a). And so, as God's adversaries, the Egyptians are depicted as allies of the angels bound in hell, and their drowning takes on spiritual and cosmic proportions.

Through the reverent glorification, the Egyptians are degraded even lower in the audience's mind, not only for their pride but also for their ingratitude as human beings. For the synaesthetic imagery intensifies the reality of the visible world and in this way implies God's beneficent purpose in creating it for mankind, i.e., after the fallen angels had vacated the heavenly thrones of the invisible world, to which will succeed only those men who have obeyed and worshipped God (Genesis 92a-101b).

In this sense the destruction of the Egyptians serves as a fearful reminder to the audience of the devastating judgement of the world in Noah's time, since 'Sicut autem in diebus Noe, ita erit et adventus Filii hominis' (Matthew 24.37). The cataclysmic images, especially those springing from the verbs, suggest the disintegrating effect of sin. But it also emphasises how abhorrent sin is to a holy God who would not stop at undoing His own work in order to eliminate

it (cf. Genesis 1279a-82a). Again, the insistence of the images on God the Creator implies how splendid must be the construction of the heavenly kingdom, which is the inheritance of the righteous, and this aspect of the creation motif is a contrastive echo of the earlier description of Solomon's magnificent temple as being folmum geworhte (396b). Thus, aspects of divine judgement and mercy are knotted in the image of the sea's rampage as the holy work of God's hand.

No one would deny that the Exodus-poem deals with the human and sinful as well as with the divine and holy; and that what it says has something to do with both an opposition and a reconciliation of these two states. On this note the poem begins, for the phrase after bealuside obviously applies not only to the experience of life on earth but also to the journey of the Israelites in the wilderness, and between the two experiences there is the road through the Red Sea, where the two meet. Although the poem is a symbolic drama in terms of the sea, its intrinsic theme is that state in which human and divine wills are one; and what the action ultimately portrays is the way in which the sea relates man to that state.

On the literal level, the Red Sea exists in the physical world, in which sinful agencies are operative, and so it is related to aspects of evil. And yet, evil is only a secondary factor in the sea's character since, by its nature, the sea is also related to good. As Tertullian argues, all species of water were sanctified by the Holy Spirit at Creation and, in virtue of this 'ancient original prerogative,' can acquire, after the invocation of God, the power of sanctifying (Danielou, The Bible and the Liturgy, pp. 72-73). Thus the sea is interfused by opposed dimensions of reality. When, however, God imposes His will upon the sea, it becomes a force for good, both creative and destructive. On the figurative level, the Red Sea

to the character of God. Similarly, as Lucas points out: 'Grammatically, the subject of sweop [481b] is Metod, but the action of the verb is one very appropriate for flod (482), and thus the Metod and the flod, the agent of the destructions He wills, become difficult to distinguish.'⁶¹ In particular, flodweard concentrates attention on God's incarnation of the sea, focused in this way to hold not only God's destructive power but also God's creative energy:

mare, per figuram baptismi, separans a Pharaone,
quemadmodum et lavacrum hoc a diaboli tyrannide.
Illud occidit hostem in sese, moritur et hic
inimicitia, quae nobis fuit cum Deo. Ab illo
populus exiit illaesus; ascendimus et nos ab
aquis tanquam ex mortuis vivi 62

The allied duality is completely acceptable because it fits into the context of spiritual warfare (e.g., Judah's tribe acting as vanguard) and it also relates to the earlier marine metaphor which describes the Israelites as seamen.

By using the simple sea:land metaphor to differentiate and represent the two opposing spiritual forces in the world, the poem opens up a plane of experience that lies beyond the mere words of its poetry. For the road the Israelites have to take in order to reach the Promised Land is neither by land nor by sea, but between the one and through the other:

⁶¹ Peter J. Lucas, "'Exodus" 480: "mod gerymde," N&Q, 214, No. 6 (1969), 207.

⁶² The sea is the figure of Baptism, since it delivered the people from Phar[ao]h, as Baptism (Loutron) from the tyranny of the devil. The sea killed the enemy; so in Baptism, our enmity to God is destroyed. The people came out of the sea whole and safe; we also come out of the water as living men from among the dead.

Basil, De Spiritu Sancto, Ch. 14.31, PG 18.1025A; trans. Danielou, The Bible and the Liturgy, p. 90.

This discrepancy between image and reality reflects the moral force of the two opposing sides. And, as Hofman[n] indicates, "wenn die 'Seewikinger' nach ihrer imaginären 'Seefahrt' durch die Wüste wirklich über die 'salzige Marsch' des Roten Meeres ziehen," reality and metaphor change places. 63

It is within this figurative (or spiritual) dimension of reality that the Noah-Abraham episodes appear and are coherent. How these figurative episodes participate in the poem's organic structure, and how they relate to the poem's total thematic interest, we shall now have to consider.

(iv)

Within the first ten lines, the poem speaks of Moses' pronouncements and his power to work miracles. Alerted to this close association of words and miracles, we notice a modified reiteration of it in the nearby lines:

 Đa wæs forma sið
 þæt hine weroda God wordum nægde,
 þær He him gesægde soðwundra fela
 (NN 22b-24b)

The pattern occurs again in Moses' speech leading up to the actual Crossing--

Hof ða for hergum hlude stefne
 lifigendra leoð, þa he to leodum spræc:
 'Hwæt, ge nu eagam to on lociað,
 folca leofost, færwundra sum'
 (NN 276a-79b)

--at which point the poem seems to insist on this connection between the power of Moses' speech itself and his miraculous gifts:

fæstum fæðmum freoðowære heold.
 Nalles hie gehyrwdon haliges lare
 siððan leofes leop læste near
 sweg swiðrode and sances bland.
 (306a-09b)

⁶³ Calder, p. 127, quoting Dietrich Hofmann, 'Untersuchungen zu den altenglischen Gedichten Genesis und Exodus,' Anglia, 75, No. 1 (1957), 27.

After the drowning of the Egyptian host, Moses again addresses the Israelites in a voice described as 'holy' (518b; cf. 257b), and the close association of words and miracles is evident once more:

Swa reordode ræda gemyndig
 manna mildost, mihtum swiðed,
 hludan stefne; here stille bad
 witodes willan, wundor ongeton,
 modiges muðhæl (549a-53a)

A final occurrence of this pattern of words and miracles has an exegetical basis of suggestion, to which we must now turn for a while.

The connection between words and miracles would seem to be a thoroughgoing motif in the Exodus-poem. In the exodus narrative itself the motif's first effect is the release of the Israelites, giving rise to the startling sail-tent metaphors in the desert. Now, there happens to be a passage in Gregory's Moralium Libri that will help to explain the sail-tent metaphors as well as this emphatic connection between words and miracles. In the Moralium Libri, Gregory enthusiastically expounds the idea that the Biblical combination of such spiritual vehicles as words and miracles is of the essence of missionary preaching. The passage in which this concept is expressed is likely to have influenced the composition of the Exodus-poem, and once we realise the precise nature of this influence we shall be able to see more clearly what parts these sail-tent metaphors and this connection between words and miracles play in the poem as a whole. To distinguish between merely parallel occurrence and actual influence is never easy, and in matters of literary criticism, palpably hazardous. But if the Exodus-poem does owe something to the first part of Gregory's exegesis, it is probably also indebted to the remainder, since Gregory treats the whole Jobian passage as a unified complex of significations. I shall maintain that the passage was an immediate basis of inorganic suggestion for the Exodus-poet.

Fortunately, the Moralium Libri was a far from remote source, so its availability can hardly be in doubt. And, much more than this, what clinches it as an imaginative source for the Anglo-Saxon Exodus-poem, and recommends that we take seriously the correspondences between the two, is the sensational mention of Britain by name and of its people as the barbaric sea:

Ecce enim pene cunctarum jam gentium corda penetravit;
 ecce in una fide Orientis limitem Occidentisque con-
 junxit; ecce lingua Britanniae, quae nil aliud nov-
 erat, quam barbarum frendere, jam dudum in divinis
 laudibus Hebraeum coepit Alleluia resonare. Ecce
 quondam tumidus, jam substratus sanctorum pedibus
 servit Oceanus, ejusque barbaros motus, quos terreni
 principes edomare ferro nequiverant, hos pro divina
 formidine sacerdotum ora simplicibus verbis ligant;
 et qui catervas pugnantium infidelis nequaquam metu-
 erat, jam nunc fidelis humilium linguas timet. 64

In Book 27 of his Moralium Libri, Gregory gives a figurative reading of Job 36.29-31 in which he first of all assigns several different significations to the nubes 'clouds':

64

For, lo! He has now penetrated the hearts of almost all nations; lo! He has joined together in one faith the boundaries of the East and of the West; lo! the tongue of Britain, which knew only how to grate barbarian sounds, has begun long since to resound in the Divine praises the Hebrew Alleluia. Behold the ocean, which before was swelling, is now calmed beneath, and subject to, the feet of the saints: and its barbarous motions, which the princes of the earth had been unable to control with the sword, do the mouths of priests bind with simple words through fear of God: and he who, when unbelieving, had not dreaded the bands of combatants, now fears, when faithful, the tongues of the humble.

Bk 27.11.21, PL 76.411A; trans. Bliss, p. 214. Migne also prints a footnote commenting on the allusion to Britain: 'Haec addita sunt diu post vulgatos Moralium libros, cum Angli de quorum conversione hic agitur, non nisi transactis plurimis Gregoriani pontificatus annis, fidem Christianam receperint.' 'These words were added long after the publication of the Books of Morals [c. A.D. 590], since the English, whose conversion is being referred to here, did not receive the Faith until Gregory had been pope some years' (translation mine).

Si voluerit extendere nubes quasi tentorium suum,
et fulgurare lumine suo desuper, cardines quoque
maris operiet. Per haec enim iudicat populos, et
dat escas multis mortalibus.

Firstly, they are preachers: 'Extendit nubes Dominus, dum ministris
suis viam praedicationis aperiens, eos in mundi latitudinem circum-
quaque diffundit.'⁶⁵ Secondly, they are tents: 'Tentorium quippe
in itinere poni solet. Et cum praedicatores sancti in mundum mittunt-
ur, iter Deo faciunt' ('For a tent is wont to be pitched, on a journey.
And, when holy preachers are sent into the world, they make a way for
God,' loc. cit.). Gregory illustrates what he means: the hearts of
saints are divine tents in the sense that God is covered by them in
resting on His journey to the hearts of men throughout the world.

As one of the saints, Moses qualifies for a description in these terms:

Nubes ejus Moyses exstitit, cum priusquam plebi
Israeliticae ducatum praeberet, quadraginta annis
in deserto permanens, et sublimia appetens, a
conversatione populi segregatus vixit. Sed tentor-
ium Dei factus est, cum ad revocandum populum in
Aegyptum missus ibat, portans invisibilem in corde
veritatem, cum omnipotens Deus, qui patescebat in
opere, latebat in corde. Et ubique praesens omnia
continens, iter in suo famulo in Aegyptum veniens
faciebat. Unde scriptum est: Ivit Deus in Aegyptum,
ut redimeret sibi populum. 66

65 "The Lord "spreads out the clouds," when, opening the way
of preaching to His ministers, He disperses them in every direction,
through the breadth of the world.' Ibid., Bk 27.11.19, PL 76.409C;
trans. Bliss, p. 212.

66 Moses appeared as His cloud, when, before he under-
took the leadership of the Jewish people, he was
dwelling for forty years in the wilderness, and
aiming at lofty things, lived separated from the
converse of the people. But he was made the tent
of God, when, on being sent into Egypt, to bring
back the people, he was going on, bearing in his
heart the invisible truth; and when Almighty God,
Who was manifested in his work, was lying concealed
in his heart. And He Who is ever present, and con-
taining all things, coming into Egypt was journey-
ing thither in His servant. Whence it is written,
God went into Egypt, that He might ransom His people.

Ibid., PL 76.410B-C; trans. Bliss, p. 213.

A look at the relevant parts of the Exodus-poem reveals an interesting correspondence between these ideas and the poem's presentation of the figure of Moses, first as 'plebis dux' (folctoga, 14a). An initial resemblance is established by the poem's insistence upon Moses' solitary communion with God 'in deserto' (on westenne, 8a) and, as has been indicated above, in Sec. (1), the poetry makes explicit the relative insignificance of Moses both spatially and temporally, as well as metaphysically and spiritually, in the presence of God. Moses' reward is also 'sublime' (Heah, 19a), and his social isolation is further implied in his unique human knowledge of God's name, "ðone ylðo bearn ær ne cuðon" (28). Then, God's presence in Moses is suggested in the lines

Hafde He þa geswiðed soðum cræftum
and gewurðodne werodes aldor,
Faraones feond, on forðwegas.
(30a-32b)

In the wilderness, Moses has been equipped and ennobled with godly powers in readiness for his approaches (forðwegas) to Pharaoh. That God actually accompanies Moses on these interviews is clearly indicated in the metonymic sentence Heofon bider becom (46b), which refers to an idea not unlike Gregory's of God's secret entry into Egypt. The poetry itself again reinforces these notions. For example, the poem conveys the presence of the Angel of Death through the image Bana wide scrað (39b), which aptly describes the action of a cloud sliding over the land (cf. Beowulf 650). And if, as now seems likely, MS dryrmyde is meant to be ðryrmyde, meaning '(was) choked' and cognate with brosm 'smoke' or 'vapour,' then the sentence land ðryrmyde/deadra hræwum (40b-41a) presents a striking associative image of God stifling or smothering the land of Egypt with the corpses of its own

people.⁶⁷ Again, in l. 52, the closeness between Moses and God (Metod) is poetically endorsed in a concrete metrical link. Clearly, Gregory's allegoresis and the Exodus-poem have common ground, though there are manifest differences of sequence and detail: for instance, the Exodus-poem does not mention the presence of a cloud when Moses is in the wilderness; nor does it associate Moses with a tent when he goes before Pharaoh; in fact, Gregory hardly refers to the exodus. Yet the resemblance abides, and these differences are probably the signs of the poem's multivalent permutation of Gregory's simple equations; e.g., the cloud imagery merges more appropriately with the tent imagery in the setting of a journey through the desert, and both are related to the national theme by means of the sail (or nautical) imagery. The appearance of the cloud-cover (lyfthelm) at the start of the exodus would probably alert the attention of anyone at all familiar with these exegetical characterisations of Moses to the idea of Moses as 'God hid in a cloud':

(wæron land heora lyfthelme beþeaht),
 mearchofu morheald. Moyses ofer þa,
 fela meorrunga, fyrde gelædde.

HEHT þa ymb twa niht tīrfæste hæleð,
 siððan hie feondum oðfaren hæfdon,
 ymbwicigean werodes beahtme
 mid ælfere Æthanes byrig,
 megnas mæste mearclandum on.
 (60a-67b)

In the context of such 'a suspiciously symbolic landscape' (Irving, NN, p. 297), the association would thus be easily made between the cloud-cover and God's residence in the figure of Moses. Although the poem never actually calls Moses a cloud or a tent, these associative identifications nevertheless help us to feel that the cloud-tent imagery participates fittingly in the poem's figurative mode.

⁶⁷ Wrenn's proposal (rev., pp. 186-87), accepted by Irving (NN, pp. 293-94).

But they do more. The establishment of imaginative links between God and Moses through the cloud-tent imagery is the poem's way of leading up to the climactic association of the Israelites with God:

Dægsceades Hleo
 wand ofer wolcnum, hæfde witig God
 sunnan siðfæt segle ofertolden,
 swa þa mæstrapas men ne cuðon,
 ne ða seglrode geseon meahton,
 eorðbuende ealle cræfte,
 hu afæstnod was feldhusa mæst.
 Siððan He mid wuldre geweorðode
 Peodenholde, þa was bridða wic
 folce to frofre. Fyrd eall geseah
 hu þær hlifedon halige seglas,
 lyftwundor lecht; leode ongeton,
 dugod Israhela, þæt þær Drihten cwom,
 weroda Drihten, wicsteal metan.
 (79b-92b)

As a contextual kenning for God, Dægsceades Hleo, parallel with witig God, encapsulates the idea of God's concealed presence.⁶⁸ Then, to complete 'the bewildering series of metaphors' (Irving, ed., p. 32), the cloud-cover, already described as a 'holy net' (74a), now becomes a sail (which Brodeur finds 'grotesque') and then a tent (which he finds 'a little far-fetched'⁶⁹). But these images appear less outlandish and strained when seen in relation to the notion of Moses as God's tent. If this parallel is reasonable enough to be entertained, it may in turn help to reveal a surprising implication

⁶⁸ Irving's ed. has hleo 'cover' and a full-stop after wolcnum. Lucas's argument that 'Since there is no mention of a threat to the day-shadow, there is no reason why God should protect it; on the contrary His concern is to protect the Israelites' ('The Cloud in the Interpretation of the Old English Exodus,' p. 307) is specious. Dægsceades is a subjective genitive (cf. mereflodes Weard, 504b). And, even if we keep MS dægscealdes (Irving, NN, p. 299), the kenning still refers to the 'Guardian of the cloud-cover.'

⁶⁹ Arthur G. Brodeur, 'A Study of Diction and Style in Three Anglo-Saxon Narrative Poems,' in Nordica et Anglica: Studies in Honor of Stefán Einarsson, ed. Allan H. Orrick, Janua Linguarum, Series Maior No. 22 (The Hague: Mouton, 1968), p. 111.

in the puzzling image feldhusa mæst, particularly in view of the Exodus-poem's evident affinity with patristic allegorical tradition. More specifically, the harmony between the exegesis and the poem becomes fully resonant only in the context of the tent-imagery, since it is in a figurative (or spiritual) sense that we are meant to understand feldhusa mæst, as is evident from its 'anchorage' being beyond human perception. When the poem says that 'the people, the host of Israelites, realised that the Lord, the God of hosts, came to measure the camp-site,' it is assuming the concept of God occupying the whole encamped nation of the Israelites, and this is the meaning that Gregory explicates in his exegesis:

Quia enim in unius populi cultu tunc Dominus
inter homines latuit, eundem sibi populum
tentorium vocavit. 70

Lucas, basing his argument on Exodus 40.32 ('operuit nubes tabernaculum testimonii, et gloria Domini implevit illud'), comes extremely close to this idea when he identifies the feldhusa mæst with the Tabernacle itself, continuing, 'The presence of the cloud implies the presence of the Tabernacle' (op. cit., p. 303), and so the cloud is symbolic of God's presence. Lucas then uses this idea to explain the merging of the nautical imagery into the image of a tent by a fusion of the two senses of the word segl 'sail' and 'veil' (Latin velum)--a 'poetic device [which] may have been suggested by a failure to distinguish the Ark [of the Covenant] from the Tabernacle. Exod. 40:19 makes clear that the Ark was to go inside the Tabernacle, yet the Biblical account sometimes give ground for confusing the two' (p. 306). This imaginative association is not particularly plausible,

70 'For since the Lord at that time dwelt secretly among men in the worship of a single people, He called that self-same people His tent.' Op. cit., Bk 27.11.19, PL 76.410A; trans. Bliss, p. 212.

and the need to assume the poem's confusion evaporates if we understand the Tabernacle to be merely figuratively present, i.e., in the form of the Israelite nation itself, bearing in mind that the Israelites did not have the Ark or the Tabernacle when they departed from Egypt. Even allowing for the artistic telescoping of historical events, and for the distorting of Biblical chronology which is a feature of this poem, it seems doubtful that the poet would omit to make more specific and special mention of something as important to the Israelites as the Ark of the Covenant. Anticipating an objection does not necessarily obviate it: if Exodus 40.19 'makes' it 'clear' that the Ark goes inside the Tabernacle, then inside it must go, no matter if earlier chapters in Exodus are vague about its location. That Lucas's idea is erroneous becomes manifest when his interpretation leads him to say that 'the strained extension of the metaphor of the tent so as to take in the Israelite third camp (where tents would have been pitched) introduces an inappropriate mundane precision' (p. 309). He thus misses the point entirely that all the Israelites' tents together make up 'the greatest of tents,' for the whole encampment is the tent of God.⁷¹ Lucas concludes:

It is intimated that the Israelites are in a tent The merging of the nautical metaphor into the 'tent'-metaphor serves to indicate that God's power was infused amongst the Israelites, not merely an external force. (p. 311, emphases mine)

On the contrary, the intimation seems rather to be in line with Gregory's equation, namely, that the Israelites are 'the greatest of tents' and God resides inside them. Thus the tent metaphor describes the Israelite nation as the embodiment of God, and the sail

⁷¹ It is also possible that the ship-image is meant to foreground the Noah episode. Cf. Hofmann, p. 20; mentioned by Irving, NN, p. 300.

metaphor emphasises the fact that they are a holy people passing through the world under God's pilotage.

In this whole pattern of imaginative correspondences between the cloud of Exodus and the clouds of the Moralium Libri there is at least one major discrepancy. In the Moralium Libri, the clouds are associated with lightning, whereas in the Exodus-poem, of course, the reference is to a beam of fire. Critics have usually been quick to pass off the sudden appearance of the fire as a technical flaw in the poem.⁷² But there seems to be no reason why the poem may not subsume a 'chain of associated notions' in which the cloud emits the beam of fire.⁷³ Even without attempting to reconstruct the Exodus-poet's transformation of his material, Gregory's exegesis itself provides an adequate explanation of the complexity of the poem's imagery.

Gregory proceeds in his exegesis to give a third interpretation of nubes 'clouds.' Changing the metaphor but not the context, he says that they are the source of words of persuasion (guttas 'rain-drops'). Then he continues by way of lexical association:

Sed eisdem sanctis praedicatoribus nequaquam ad persuadendum verba sufficiunt, nisi etiam miracula addantur. Unde cum dictum sit: Si voluerit extendere nubes quasi tentorium suum, recte

⁷² E.g., Irving, ed., pp. 4-6; Lucas, p. 301.

⁷³ The phrase belongs to G. V. Smithers, 'The Meaning of The Seafarer and The Wanderer,' MAE, 26, No. 3 (1957), 149. Lucas is quite wrong when he presumes the pillar of fire to be horizontal (p. 309, n. 52). For how then is it to prefigure Christ? (Danielou, The Bible and the Liturgy, p. 93). The use of the word beam to describe the pillar is surely significant, and its reappearance at the end of the poem in the phrase wuldres beam (568a) subtly evokes the Cross, as it explicitly describes the Cross in The Dream of the Rood 97b and Elene 217b (Earl, pp. 562-63). In fact, there is a seventh century depiction of the pillar of fire looking a bit like a tall, thin bush. See Charles Rufus Morey, Early Christian Art: An Outline . . . (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1942), fig. 62. For clarity's sake I regularly refer to the pillar of fire as a beam of fire.

subjungitur: Et fulgurare lumine suo desuper. Quid enim sentire fulgura, nisi miracula debemus? de quibus per Psalmistam dicitur: Fulgura multiplicabis, et conturbabis eos. Per has ergo nubes lumine suo desuper fulgurat, quia per praedicatores sanctos insensibilitatis nostrae tenebras etiam miraculis illustrat. 74

The image here presented is of storm-clouds, i.e., clouds containing rain (words) and lightning (miracles). The cloud-cover in the Exodus-poem is also of this kind. Part of the effectiveness of its protection against the heat is due to the fact that it is very much a 'rain-bearing cloud' (wederwolcen, 75a) on which the scorching sun can 'drink' (adranc, 77b). But there is an even closer correspondence of ideas between Gregory's interpretation and the Exodus-poem's imagery. Like the lightning, the miraculous aerial light in the Exodus-poem consorts with the cloud; they both share the same verb, for example: hlifedon halige seglas, / lyftwundor leocht (89a-90a). As this is its first appearance in the poem, the light or fyr (93b) would seem to issue from the cloud itself. In addition to its having a 'marvellous' (syllic, 109a) quality, the 'burning beam' (111a) 'tenebras illustrat' and so dispels the fears that pounce out of the bleak heath during stormy weather:

Blace stodon
ofer sceotendum scire leoman,

74

But words only are by no means sufficient for these same holy preachers, for persuasion, unless miracles are also added. Whence it is said, When He will spread out the clouds as His tent, it is rightly subjoined, And lighten with His light from above. For what else but miracles ought we to suppose lightnings to mean? Of which it is said by the Psalmist, Thou wilt multiply Thy lightnings, and confound them. By these clouds then He lightens from above with His light; because by holy preachers He illumines the gloom of our insensibility even by miracles.

scinon scyldhreoðan, sceaðo swiðredon;
 neowle nihtscuwan neah ne mihton
 heolstor ahydan. Heofoncandel barn;
 niwe nihtweard nyde sceolde
 wician ofer weredum, þy læs him westengryre,
 har hæðbroga, holmegum wederum
 on ferclamme ferhð getwæfde.
 (111b-19b)

However, the fiery guardian of the night is itself terrifying,
 though for the Israelites' own good:

Hæfde foregenga fyrene loccas,
 blace beamas, belegsan hweop
 in þam hereþreate, hatan lige,
 þæt he on westenne werod forþærnde,
 nymðe hie modhwate Moyses hyrde,
 scean scirwerod; scyldas lixton,
 gesawon randwigan rihte stræte
 (NN 120a-26b)

The fyrene loccas are an especially alarming sight, and there may even be the aural image of threatening, bellowing thunder in MS bell egsan where the first element might be related to the verb bellan 'to roar' (Blackburn, ed., Exodus and Daniel, p. 41). In any event, one's general impression of the beam of fire is that it is a species of lightning.⁷⁵ The foci of interest in the cloud and fire imagery are God's supernatural protection of, and yet intimate presence in, the Israelite nation, and His fearful guidance and control of the people.⁷⁶

⁷⁵ There is surely a kind of 'double vision' or poetic fusion of ideas in the lines

Fana up gerad,
 beama beorhtost; bidon ealle þa gen
 hwonne siðboda sæstreamum neah
 lecht ofer lindum lyftedoras bræc.
 (248b-51b)

See Isaacs, 'Exodus and the Essential Digression,' p. 152, and Lucas, op. cit., p. 308.

⁷⁶ In patristic commentaries, the fiery beam is also associated with judgement and punishment (Irving, ed., p. 76, n. 123-4).

It is at least tenable, then, that the idea of clouds and fire symbolising Moses' role as a preacher came to the Exodus-poet from Gregory's Moralium Libri, and that the poet adapted it imaginatively to harmonise with his interpretation of the exodus story and in relation to mediaeval Christian allegorical tradition. Moses is the Israelites' deliverer and guide, but he also proclaims to them a holy life and a new kingdom; so that, as lawgiver of the New Covenant, Christ is his antitype (Danielou, From Shadows to Reality, pp. 197-98). On the shore of the Red Sea, Moses interprets the eternal precepts for the Israelites, and 'the reference to a single occasion of preaching gives way to general remarks on Moses' preaching' (Isaacs, p. 155). To open up the perspective of Moses as preacher is to become more alive to the homiletic quality of the poem's essential mode which comprises a structural pattern of words and miracles.

With these ideas in mind, we turn again to Gregory's missionary paradigm and find that the net effect of sermons and signs is the conviction of sin:

Per haec nimirum verba praedicatorum, id est guttas nubium, per haec fulgura miraculorum Deus populos judicat, quia eorum corda territa ad poenitentiam vocat. Nam dum superna audiunt, dum mira opera attendunt, mox ad corda sua redeunt, et se de ante-actis pravitatibus affligentes, aeterna tormenta pertimescunt. 77

It is within this context that Gregory provides a fourth interpreta-

77

By these words of preachers, that is drops of the clouds, by these lightnings of miracles, God doubtless judges the peoples; because He invites their terrified hearts to repentance. For when they hear heavenly things, when they attend to marvellous works, they soon return into their own hearts, and afflicting themselves for their former wickednesses, dread eternal torments.

tion of the Jobian clouds: they are the source of words of consolation or hope (esca 'food'):

Sed per easdem nubes per quas terror infligitur, etiam esca datur, quia magna praedicatorum dispensatio est, ut sic sciant superbientium mentes affligere, ut etiam afflictas noverint consolationis eloquio nutrire, quatenus et peccantes de aeternis suppliciis terreant, et poenitentes de superni regni gaudiis pascant. 78

Typologically, the kind of food referred to here is the manna that the Israelites received shortly after they crossed the Red Sea (Exodus 16); at the same time, it is verbi pabulum 'the food of the word' which is given by preachers to corda jejuna 'hungry hearts.' Gregory's exegesis of this point is in line with 'the whole Alexandrine tradition [which] from Clement to Origen, following Philo, understands the manna to be a figure of the word of God, following Matthew IV:4' (Danielou, The Bible and the Liturgy, p. 148). Matthew echoes Deuteronomy 8.3 which establishes the first identification of the manna as God's word or, as Origen means it, 'the teaching of Scripture which nourishes the soul' (From Shadows to Reality, p. 222). Interestingly, at least two recent critics believe, with more than adequate grounds, that Moses' second speech (beginning Panon Israhelum ece rēdas, 516) alludes to the Book of Deuteronomy.⁷⁹ The very name 'Deuteronomy' prefigures the New Testament: 'Deuteronomium Graeco sermone appellatur, quod Latine interpretatur secunda lex,

78 But food is given too by these same clouds by which terror is inflicted: since mighty is the trust committed to preachers to know how so to afflict the minds of the haughty, as yet to be skilful in cherishing them when afflicted, with words of consolation; so as to alarm sinners with eternal punishments, and support penitents with the joys of the kingdom of heaven. (loc. cit.)

79 Earl, pp. 547-60, and Irving, NN, p. 321.

id est, repetitio, et evangelicae legis praefiguratio.⁸⁰ So that, although the poem nowhere describes Scripture as food or bread-- unless ginfæstan god (525a) 'generous good' has these connotations-- the suggestion is a strong one that, in this speech, Moses is fulfilling the function of a preacher preparing the Israelites for the test that the manna creates, namely, whether or not they will keep God's halige lare (561b; Exodus 16.4).

But there is an ambiguity in these lines which has an important bearing on our understanding of the poem as a whole. Irving thinks that Swa reordode (549a) 'can only refer to [the] preceding speech,' i.e., ll. 523a-48b, and so he attributes these lines to Moses-Christ (NN, p. 320). But it is possible to take swa in an introductory sense, making the immediately preceding lines a direct interruption, an aside as it were, by the poet himself.⁸¹ Tentative intrinsic support for this reading is the fact that there is no mention of the Israelites keeping a respectful silence before Moses addresses them, as they do in l. 254 and l. 551b. Indeed, the transition from the drowning of the Egyptians to Moses' speech would otherwise strike one as being abrupt, were it not taken as part of the narrative and as consistent with the poem's technique of swiftly changing scenes to effect contrast (Greenfield, A Critical History . . ., pp. 155-56). In this particular instance, the purpose of the contrast is to point up the rewards of humility and obedience to God's laws.

⁸⁰ Isidore, Etymologiae, Bk 6.2.7, PL 82.230C, cited by Irving (loc. cit.).

⁸¹ Earl, Farrell ('A Reading of OE. Exodus'), and Isaacs all read swa as introductory. But see T. P. Dunning and A. J. Bliss's discussion of the pro- and retrospective reference of swa in their ed. of The Wanderer, Methuen's Old English Library (London: Methuen, 1969), pp. 30-36, though they do not adduce this swa reordode as a parallel construction.

The further possibility of the poet's intrusion at this point in the poem is strengthened by the ambiguity of the pronoun we (529a): does it have the same referent as the we in the opening line of the poem?⁸²

This ambiguity yields three interrelated meanings which contribute to the total statement of the poem. As part of the structural pattern of words and miracles, the lines complete Gregory's homiletic formula, for they refer both to 'aeterna tormenta' (open ece scraf, 538a) and to 'superni regni gaudia' (lyftwynna, NN 532a). In short, the poem's cloud and fire imagery is a preparation for the homiletic passage. An eschatological sermon by Moses is especially appropriate at this point in the poem, when the miraculous crossing has just been made under the guidance of the beam of fire:

Folc was on lande!
 Hæfde wuldres beam werud gelæded,
 halige heapas, on hild Godes.
 (567b-69b)

In the figure of a preacher, Moses speaks to the Israelites as a congregation when he warns them that God will continue to prosper them only so long as they gehealdað halige lare (561). The theme of separation, which developed into the theme of lineage and descent, under the influence of a carefully constructed narrative context--the death of the first-born and the Noah-Abraham episode--has its natural conclusion in this eschatological speech by Moses.

The first (though not necessarily the primary) reference of we, then, is to Moses and the Israelites. The whole homiletic process as outlined by Gregory is illustrated in embryo in the fortunes of the Israelites. Moses speaks to them, terrified and with their

⁸² Though he does so probably formulaically, the poet nonetheless introduces himself into the poem at 98a and possibly at 285b.

backs to an intractable sea, as they face the oncoming Egyptians and says that their hearts have no divine knowledge in them; that he will supply their lack of faith. Then he performs the numinous miracle of parting the Red Sea--made even more numinous by its subsequent depiction in terms of the experience of the Israelites themselves, the patriarchs, and the Egyptians. Figuratively, the sea rids the Israelites of their pride, and so Moses' sketch of the joys of the new life fills them with a triumphant hope.

However, to return to the Moralium Libri, after saying that God dwelt in the worshipping hearts of the Israelite people, Gregory immediately compares them, by implication, to the worshipping hearts of Christians, i.e., Israelites per gratiam, when he says: 'Unde et recte nunc nubes istae ejus tentorium dicuntur, quia ad nos Deus per gratiam veniens, intra praedicatorum suorum mentes operitur.'⁸³

Another reference of we, then, is a more general one, including the poet and all other Christians as preachers of the Gospel. As Paul says in his Second Letter to the Corinthians: 'sufficiencia nostra ex Deo est: qui et idoneos nos fecit ministros novi testamenti: non littera, sed Spiritu: littera enim occidit, Spiritus autem vivificat' (3.5-6). The Israelites' journey beneath a cover of cloud through many countries assumes the additional figurative significance of the mission of Christians to preach throughout the world. This idea gains in force if, in the subsequent nautical imagery, we see the Israelites as Christians following the Cross over the sea of this world to heaven.⁸⁴ If Moses' intention is to constrain the Israelites to

⁸³ 'Whence also these clouds are now rightly called His tent, because God, when coming to us by His grace, is concealed within the hearts of His preachers,' Bk 27.11.19, PL 76.410A; trans. Bliss, p. 212.

⁸⁴ J. E. Cross, 'The Old English Period,' in The Middle Ages, ed. W. F. Bolton, p. 29. But see Lucas, p. 301, n. 15.

keep God's teaching, then it is the intention of Christians, as Gregory puts it, to convert 'extremos etiam mundi terminos in divinum amorem':

Unde recte subditur: Cardines quoque maris operiet.
 . . . Omnipotens enim Dominus coruscantibus nubibus
 cardines maris operuit, quia emicantibus praedica-
 torum miraculis, ad fidem etiam terminos mundi per-
 duxit. 85

A third reference of we is to the more immediate one of the poet preaching to his Anglo-Saxon audience. The rhetorical character of Moses helps the audience to respond personally to the poet's voice when he introduces the patently homiletic passage. Engaged and en-joined by the overtly didactic imagery, the audience would find little difficulty in identifying the Anglo-Saxon poet as a 'tent' of God, and would need to shift their perspective only very slightly to see themselves as 'tents' of God. It is here that the Exodus-poem consummates its intention and meaning. The Anglo-Saxon audience can take their example from the Israelites as they are portrayed triumphant at the end of the poem only up to a point, for the audience know that the Israelites eventually 'forleton/ Drihtnes domas, curon deofles cræft' (Daniel, ASPR, I, 31b-32b, capitalised).

The irony in the final scenes of the poem is strongly suggested by the silent alternative in Moses' second speech. The poem leaves implicit what will happen should the Israelites fail to keep God's holy laws, but one is aware of a tone similar to that in the last

85 'to divine love even the farthest boundaries of the world':

Whence it is rightly subjoined, He will cover also the ends of the sea. . . . For the Almighty Lord has covered, with His lightening [sic] clouds, the ends of the sea; because, by the brilliant miracles of preachers, He has brought even the ends of the world to the faith.

line of the Proem, 'Gehyre se ðe wille!' Moreover, the imagery evinces this ironic attitude by exploiting the figurative value of the Red Sea. Having carefully contrasted the prosperity of the man who obeys God's teaching with the fate of the man who knows only the world's way, the poem now, by means of a hypermetric flashback, infuses the context of the Israelites' triumph with the experience and fate of the Egyptians doomed in the Red Sea:

life gefeon þa hie oðlæded hæfdon
feorh of feonda dome, þeah ðe hie hit frecne geneðdon,
weas under wætera hrofas. Gesawon hie þær weallas
 standan,
ealle him brimu blodige þuhton, þurh þa heora beado-
searo wægon. (570a-73b)

The sense of irony is perhaps made more acute by the singing of the battle-hymn in praise of God for þam dædweorce (576a)--'Dominus quasi vir pugnator' (Exodus 15.3)--for the reference to this canticle invokes a contrast with Moses' other canticle which God commands him to compose in order to help the Israelites remember the law (Deuteronomy 31.19 and 32.1-43). The tone of the closing lines of the poem insists on the irony inherent in the joy of the Israelites:

Heo on riht sceodon
gold and godweb, Iosepes gestreon,
wera wuldorgesteald. Werigend lagon
on deaðstede, drihtfolca mæst.
 (587a-90b)

Without the poet's intervening interpretational passage the impact of this final vision of the sea would not have its full homiletic force. For the 'place of death' serves the double homiletic purpose of bringing the audience to think in terms of God's judgement and of getting them to consider their own situation, and this realisation helps them to transmute their moral identification into an awareness of their spiritual nationality. At the same time, the Exodus-poem also achieves a twofold artistic purpose: one, bringing the significance of the whole poem, as a self-contained experience, to bear on

the actual life of the audience; and two, creating a climax that is at the same time an imaginative coupling for the next stage of the story of the Israelites, as, for example, is told in Daniel.

The recurrence of images of the destructive aspect of the Red Sea extends its typological significance a step further, for the final vision of the sea completes the development of the audience's spiritual consciousness. In his last comment on the Jobian verses (Bk 27.12.23), Gregory points out that many in the Church 'vitam fidei non tenent' (PL 76.412B), some lose it through pride. And in the Exodus-poem pride is the especial sin of the Egyptians (170b, 204b, 455a, 487b, 515a) for which, at the end of the poem, they are rightly brought low (lagon, 589b). Eschatological associations thus inform the poem's last image.

The main purpose of the theme of separation in the first part of the poem is to establish a state of awareness in the audience of two, naturally incompatible moral forces in the world. In the homiletic passage at the end of the poem the theme of separation reappears in an explicitly Christian depiction of the Day of Judgement. This is entirely appropriate to the baptismal typology of the earlier part of the poem, since the notions of judgement and mercy, of death and birth, are at the heart of the theology of baptism. The main purpose of the complex metaphoric structure of the description of the Crossing is to make the audience perceive God's plans for all mankind working out in every encounter between those two moral forces.

The aesthetic achievement of the Exodus-poem is that it manages to make the Crossing of the Red Sea typologically significant by using the actual processes of creation and destruction, themselves conceived realistically, to give substance to the abstract concept of spiritual nationality and its attendant emotions. The audience's

primary response is to the struggle of an actual battle between two nations. But this response is converted into a deeper sense of spiritual nationality when the battle is seen as part of the figurative pattern of the spiritual conflicts informing the whole poem. The audience apprehend the poem 'poetically,' but only as an aspect of feeling its basic tension in a thoroughly realistic way. Like the Israelites, the Anglo-Saxon audience hear Moses' ræd (6b, 269b, 516b, 549b). Sailors in the desert of a hostile world, the audience also need spiritual navigation and sustenance, and the experience of their identification thus becomes an integral part of the poem.

From the opening lines of the poem, the audience are drawn into the Israelites' plight, which the audience are meant to interpret as a moral struggle for national identity. In the Crossing of the Red Sea, the national awareness is qualified by the typological reverberations of the metaphoric structure of the poem at that point, and by the figurative character of the sea itself. In the deliverance of the Israelites, the audience see the process by which the moral conflict is transformed from a cosmic and spiritual struggle into a consciousness of spiritual nationality: the Israelites are God's own holy nation. At the same time, the spiritual nationality of the audience, identifying themselves with the Israelites, develops correspondingly. Thus, when the poet intrudes to tell the audience of the moral value of God's spiritual laws, they have already apprehended it poetically. In the portrayal of the Red Sea, the audience realise the cosmic dimensions of the moral conflict and, through the metaphoric structure of the description of the Crossing of the Red Sea, they begin to realise the spiritual implications of the conflict. The audience know that the Israelites will not keep Moses' laws; that the only way the Israelites can remain righteous is through

faith in God's promise to Abraham. The Israelites see themselves as God's people, but the Anglo-Saxon audience reach a point at which they differentiate two groups of Israelites: the law-breakers and the faithful. The poem's homiletic mode lies in this process of the audience, conscious of their own unrighteousness, seeking to identify themselves with the faithful. And the poem's real meaning is to be found not in its reduction to a typological allegory,⁸⁶ but in this process of identification by the Anglo-Saxon audience of their own actual spiritual nationality.

And yet the poem describes in a far more universal way how this homiletic effect is achieved in the complex figurative system of the audience's mind. Essentially, the mode of the Exodus-poem consists in the pattern of its larger imagistic structure. The clouds, the tents, the speeches, the miracles, the Crossing--all make up the historical experience through which the audience are imaginatively 'led' to their true self-awareness. Thus the thematic purpose perfectly matches the homiletic purpose, and this reveals itself in the marine metaphors (especially flodweard) which relate the poem's imagistic structure to its one central homiletic concern, namely, the renewal of men's heavenly citizenship through the sacrament of Baptism. The awareness of a cosmic and spiritual struggle induces the audience to identify themselves at first with the triumphant Israelites, and afterwards to seek to be counted among God's spiritual people, i.e., as 'naturalised' Christians.

⁸⁶ See J. E. Cross, rev. of Greenfield's A Critical History of Old English Literature, ES, 51, No. 3 (1970), 246.

Chapter 5

THE TONGUED SEA

ANDREAS AND THE RHETORIC OF SALVATION

Although Andreas tells of an actual disciple and apostle of Christ, and not simply of a later follower, the poem is usually classified as a saint's legend. For this reason, the story of an apostle may perhaps be regarded as prototypical of the genre, so that our conclusions about this particular Anglo-Saxon poetic version (not mere translation) of the apocryphal acts of Andrew will, by and large, be applicable to the other Anglo-Saxon poetic hagiographies: Elene, Fates of the Apostles, the Guthlac-poems, and Juliana.

If only for the mediaeval popularity of the genre of the saint's legend, the mere inclusion of Andreas in the Vercelli Book is a literary distinction, quite apart from any individual merit the poem may have, for the stock-in-trade of a saint's legend consists of the marvellous and the miraculous, designed as it is 'to arouse a romantic sense of wonder.'¹ As far as we know, the Anglo-Saxons had no vernacular tradition of prose saints' legends and had to rely on stories told in verse, though Cross probably goes too far when he suggests that 'Andreas to the Anglo-Saxon listeners may well have been of the same standard and had the same effect as an average

¹ Rosemary Woolf, 'Saints' Lives,' in Continuations and Beginnings: Studies in Old English Literature, ed. Eric Gerald Stanley (London: Nelson, 1966), p. 43.

thriller of today.'² The mediaeval criticism of Old Icelandic sagas treating of saints applies with almost equal justice to the Anglo-Saxon poetic saints' legends, that there is a great deal of wisdom to be derived from them but not much entertainment.³ This holds especially good for Andreas since Andrew is a messenger of unique holy wisdom, viz., the gospel, his business in Mermedonia is of a serious Christian nature and, like that of all hagiographers, the poet's intention is an elevated one: instruction and edification, as opposed to mere entertainment (Cross, p. 33).

Considering its length, Andreas has been strangely neglected by critics, and the little that has been said of the poem can hardly be said to recommend it.⁴ Nowadays, few believe that Andreas is the work of the poet Cynewulf, partly because most scholars separate it from its ostensible epilogue, the 'signed' Fates of the Apostles, and partly for stylistic reasons, the poem actually owing nothing even to a Cynewulfian school.⁵ Quite a different question,

² J. E. Cross, 'The Old English Period,' in The Middle Ages, ed. W. F. Bolton, Sphere History of Literature in the English Language, Vol. 1 (London: Sphere, 1970), p. 38.

³ Herman Pálsson and Paul Edwards, Legendary Fiction in Medieval Iceland, Studia Islandica, Vol. 30 (Reykjavik: Univ. of Iceland, 1970), p. 37.

⁴ Stanley B. Greenfield's comments, in A Critical History of Old English Literature (London: Univ. of London Press, 1966), pp. 105-07, are refreshingly exceptional and fair. Though I think that Alvin A. Lee, The Guest-Hall of Eden: Four Essays on the Design of Old English Poetry (New Haven and London: Yale Univ. Press, 1972), elsewhere exaggerates his praise of the poem, I entirely agree with these parts of his assessment: that it is 'a sustained, complex display of Old English poetic craftsmanship' (p. 85), and that 'the fabric of the highly wrought, associative imagery characteristic of Andreas raises it to the level of a complex and rich symbolic poem' (p. 90).

⁵ To Claes Schaar, Critical Studies in the Cynewulf Group, Lund Studies in English, No. 17 (Lund: Gleerup, 1949), the dif-

however, is its Beowulfian debt, and the criticism of Andreas is bedevilled by putative influences or borrowings from that poem. Critics seem unable to discuss Andreas without referring to Beowulf, presumably as a kind of touchstone, as if Beowulf were demonstrably at the centre of the Anglo-Saxon poetic tradition, or as if Andreas were aspiring to the dignity of an epic. But the result is not merely that the obvious merits of the one highlight the deficiencies of the other, but also that the special qualities of Andreas also go unrealised for the lack of any adequate frame of descriptive reference.⁶ Nor, for that matter, has anyone yet tried to give,

ferent sources of each poem are evidence 'in favour of different authorship' (p. 104). In the conclusion to his exhaustive study, Schaar says: 'Andreas and Guthlac A, finally, are least similar to Cynewulf: not so much on account of different traditional influence, which, in the former poem, is quite as strong as it is in Cynewulf, but on account of mannerisms and lack of discriminative talent which are as foreign as possible to the characteristics of Cynewulf's work' (p. 326). See, too, Kenneth Sisam, Studies in the History of Old English Literature (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1953), p. 10; Kenneth R. Brooks, ed., Andreas and the Fates of the Apostles (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961), pp. xx-xxii; and Greenfield, pp. 108, 183. C. L. Wrenn, on the other hand, regards the poem as 'belonging clearly to the Cynewulf group' (A Study of Old English Literature, London: Harrap, 1967, p. 123).

⁶ George Philip Krapp, ed., Andreas and The Fates of the Apostles: Two Anglo-Saxon Narrative Poems, The Albion Series (Boston: Ginn, 1906), pp. li-lviii, and Charles W. Kennedy, The Earliest English Poetry, forew. James P. Pettegrove (1943; rpt. Totowa, N. J.: Rowman & Littlefield, 1971), pp. 278-79, represent those scholars susceptible to making the unfavourable comparison. Kennedy's broad structural parallels between the two poems are forced and exceed plausibility (esp. p. 269). Leonard J. Peters, 'The Relationship of the Old English Andreas to Beowulf,' PMLA, 66, No. 5 (1951), 844-63, tries to balance the debate by methodically repugning the notion that the Andreas-poet used the epic as a model. Cf. Wrenn, op. cit., p. 134. Sound, though not always convincing, is Arthur G. Brodeur's discussion of this whole issue in 'A Study of Diction and Style in Three Anglo-Saxon Narrative Poems,' in Nordica et Anglica: Studies in Honor of Stefán Einarsson, ed. Allan H. Orrick, Janua Linguarum, Series Maior No. 22 (The Hague: Mouton, 1968), pp. 97-114, which he concludes by agreeing that: 'The author of Andreas was indeed an excellent poet, with a real flair for vivid and forceful, and sometimes beautiful, phrase and image. If he falls short

narrative continuity, length, and martial imagery are not enough; the matter is a little more complicated than that. For one thing, there are no hard and fast distinguishing qualities of an epic in the early Middle Ages; for another, and to a considerable degree, epic overlaps romance. Bloomfield's structural differentiation, which has limitations of its own, is nevertheless useful in this instance: that epic narrative distinguishes itself from romance by being rationally motivated and historically explicable in the minds of all men.⁸ Since the saint's legend is a genre of romance, it is easy to see how some critics have come to misread Andreas, for the poem is a religious romance which exploits traditional epic diction.

The saint's life does not have the historical rationality of the epic, but a saint is a miles Christi, equipped with the spiritual armour described by the apostle Paul in his Letter to the Ephesians, and whatever the saint says or does can be related to the martial state of cosmic affairs. Andrew opposes all the dark, non-human forces which hold sway in Mermedonia, much as Christ had to do battle with Satan while on earth. And it is this spiritual correlation between saint and Christ that the Andreas-poet describes by means of conventional heroic imagery and epic diction, which suit the Christian subject-matter and establish the appropriately serious tone. But this epic-heroic element remains merely subservient to a much larger poetic strategy. Andrew is more than simply Cristes cempa (991a),⁹ and Andreas is more than just a Christian

⁸ Morton W. Bloomfield, 'Episodic Motivation and Marvels in Epic and Romance,' in Essays and Explorations: Studies in Ideas, Language, and Literature, by Morton W. Bloomfield, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1970), pp. 97, 105.

⁹ All textual quotations are from Brooks's ed. Angle brackets, circumflexes, and italics have been omitted, while the first letter of words denoting the Deity are capitalised.

epic. When, for example, Andrew's disciples portray their devotion to him in terms of the secular heroic ethic, they reaffirm their faith in him as their spiritual leader, but they also show that they are committed to him as a man and are determined to help him in his mission as far as they are humanly able. The secular heroic component thus works in two complementary ways: while grounding the action firmly in the material and temporal world of human beings, it also realises the poem's spiritual and supernatural dimension. In short, by using the traditional Germanic poetic material, the Andreas-poet is able to convey that the saint lives a life that is rational as well as irrational, and that he has an epic-romantic perspective of the world about him.

To be credible to an audience, however, distortions of history and logical absurdities have to be authenticated, especially in an account of a saint's life, which is intended to educate the audience.¹⁰ But the Andreas-poet's task of representing reality is made easier by the basic Scriptural facts which he shares with his audience. Not only this, towards the end of the poem (1478a-91b), the poet intrudes to tell us that countless other adventures of Andrew exist, but that the whole account of them would take a man far more learned than himself to give. This admission by the poet seems to be simply another way of saying that the facts of his own story are well-known, that they have the authority of popular oral tradition (fyrnsægen, 1489b).

The poem's romantic or 'unreal' level of meaning, on the other hand, is supported by a series of rhetorical metaphors. 'Rhetorical' is here meant to refer to the kind of language used in public oral

¹⁰ See Bloomfield, p. 118, and 'Authenticating Realism and the Realism of Chaucer,' also in Essays and Explorations, p. 183.

delivery either to blame or praise, i.e., in an epideictic sense; or to persuade an audience to act in a certain way, i.e., in a deliberative sense. Rhetorical metaphors are apparently gratuitous comparisons made directly to something usually outside the immediate context. They are simple comparisons carefully selected by the poet for the purpose of evoking a quick but precise response. The meaning of a rhetorical metaphor is determined largely by its internal structure. In Sec. (iii) of the introductory chapter of the present study, it was shown how every metaphor consists of two semantic components, a tenor and a vehicle. It was then shown how the tenor of a poetic metaphor is usually an abstract reality such as an idea, an emotion, a set of values, and so on, while its vehicle is always concrete and detailed. In a rhetorical metaphor, however, both vehicle and tenor are concrete and, on the whole, their respective imagery is not allowed to proliferate, so that neither dominates the metaphor. In this way, although the audience already clearly perceive the tenor in itself, the vehicle provides a new perspective on it by highlighting certain of the tenor's features and subduing others. In other words, a rhetorical metaphor influences an audience's own private conception of a concrete reality. Putting all of this in still another way, one might say that a rhetorical metaphor enriches the audience's apprehension of the real world by giving them a 'cohesive picture of the world of immediate issues and objects in which [they] live on a day-by-day basis.'¹¹ But the meaning of a rhetorical metaphor is further limited by its external substance. Often,

¹¹ Michael McDonald Osborn, 'The Function and Significance of Metaphor in Rhetorical Discourse,' Diss. Florida 1963, p. 294. Much of this definition of a rhetorical metaphor is derived from Osborn's discussion of the characteristics of metaphor in rhetorical discourse (Ch. 7, pp. 274-99).

a rhetorical metaphor is announced by a word that signals the closed comparison of a simile: e.g., gelicost, swa, or swylce. Furthermore, the sense of a rhetorical metaphor is rigorously assisted by its immediate verbal setting, which disciplines associations, defends their appropriateness, and so directs and clarifies the metaphor's meaning. That is to say, unlike a poetic metaphor, a rhetorical metaphor does not necessarily invite the discovery of new and unexpected relationships; rather, it associates a particular subject with qualities that, by and large, are stylised and universally fixed. For instance, when the imprisoned Matthew pathetically cries out that he has been forced to act swa þa dumban neat (67b), the words he uses characterise as bestial his muteness, his meekness, and the apparent absence of his intellect.

There are several, separate rhetorical metaphors in Andreas, and it is within this intrinsic context of intermittent figuration that we get the sustained sea-description (235a-536b). Thus, before we can give a metaphoric interpretation of the poem's major sea-passage, we must briefly analyse each rhetorical metaphor and then delineate the narrative significance of each in the poem's larger thematic structure. First, however, we shall have to pick up our bearings in the opening scenes of the poem.

(1)

On a superficial view, Andreas falls naturally into two parts: from the beginning to l. 1057b, the poem tells of Andrew's rescue of Matthew from the island of the Mermedonians; the rest of the poem concerns itself with Andrew's conversion of Matthew's captors. The personal history of Andrew himself forms the bridge between the two parts, and it is the poem's presentation of Andrew's experience that

complicates our appreciation of the basically simple story. Yet the poem's effectiveness is not attributable primarily to the story.

Though some laudatory notice has been given to the poem's atmospheric and graphic effects (Greenfield, pp. 106-07), the poem's true distinction has remained largely unrecognised because the poetic purposes of these effects have not been fully appreciated.¹² The introduction of Mermedonia, for instance, contains some grisly appeals to the imagination, but it is a grisliness that is not there for its own sake but as a contrast with the splendour of Matthew.

The fame and illustriousness of the apostles is established in the opening lines of Andreas. Closely associated with the stars, they are described in both cosmological¹³ and heroic terms. Their 'brightness' (þrym) never grew faint on the battlefield, their

¹² But the new current of criticism is promising. Lee's dozen pages (pp. 83-95) were preceded by Thomas D. Hill's 'Figural Narrative in Andreas: The Conversion of the Mermedonians,' NM, 70, No. 2 (1969), 261-73; Joseph B. Trahern's explanatory note on 'Joshua and Tobias in the Old English Andreas,' Studia Neophilologica, 42, No. 2 (1970), 330-32; Wallace G. Gobar's 'Andreas, Lines 360-362,' NM, 73, No. 3 (1972), 672-74; and David Hamilton's 'The diet and digestion of allegory in Andreas,' Anglo-Saxon England, 1 (1972), 147-58. More recently, Penn R. Szittyá has followed Hill's direction with 'The Living Stone and the Patriarchs: Typological Imagery in Andreas, Lines 706-810,' JEGP, 72, No. 2 (1973), 167-74, as has John Casteen with 'Andreas: Mermedonian Cannibalism and Figural Narration,' NM, 75, No. 1 (1974), 74-78. Still lacking is a detailed critical appraisal of the seriousness of the poem's achievement as a whole.

¹³ In The Rune Poem, the rune called tir is said to be tacna sum (ASPR, VI, 48a), i.e., a star or constellation (*ibid.*, p. 157). The miraculous feats of a saint may have been thought of by some as the results of magic. See, for instance, Andreas 1358b-62b. By linking the apostles with the starry sphere, the poem automatically removes them from the world of men. In the mediaeval cosmos, the stars are separated from the earth by the seven spheres of planets, and separated from heaven by the Primum Mobile. The earth itself is down on the bottom of the universe. Human life on earth is thus for the saint a lower plane of intelligent existence, and it is here that the central conflict in the poem is enacted (C. S. Lewis, The Discarded Image: An Introduction to Medieval and Renaissance Literature, Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1964, pp. 96-98, 156-61).

strategy was directed by the king from his headquarters in the lofty skies, and their instructions and help came from above:

HWAET, we gefrunan on fyrndagum
 twelfe under tunglum tireadige hēleð,
 beodnes þegnas. No hira brym alæg
 camprædenne, þonne cumbol hneotan,
 syððan hie gedældon swa him Dryhten sylf,
 heofona Heahcyning, hlyt getæhte.

The high-flown language of the passage is seen to reflect this human elevation of the apostles when compared with the concrete terms of the image that follows it:

Þæt wæron mære men ofer eorðan,
 frome folctogan ond fyrdhwate,
 rofe rincas, þonne rond ond hand
 on herefelda helm ealgodon,
 on meotudwange; wæs hira Matheus sum
 (7a-11b)

The apostles, deployed throughout the world by God, are engaged in a defensive struggle for the lives of their fellow human beings--conspicuous is the absence of any offensive weapons--and the repetition of herefelda only seven lines later (18a) gives prominence to this idea of apostles, and saints after them, as guardians of mankind. Abruptly, the poem focuses even more sharply on a single apostle, Matthew, and this imagistic movement from the group (men) to the individual (sum) echoes the contrastive action in the earlier verbs, hneotan 'clashed' as opposed to gedældon 'parted,' and this rhythm serves to harmonise the introduction to the poem even more. Every apostle, in other words, is alone and abroad in the world, ever working the good of men and women as God commands him to. It is, then, the earthly life of an apostle that becomes the poem's main concern.

Despite Kennedy's calling his entire verse-translation of the poem 'St Andrew's Mission to Mermedonia,' Matthew's predicament is more than simply a narrative device for bringing Andrew to

Mermedonia.¹⁴ The poem's presentation of Matthew's 'lot' ingeniously prepares the imaginative environment into which we shall have to accompany Andrew. We are here, in Matthew's imprisonment, examining the roots of a dramatic irony which is basic to the poem's mode. Having described the apostles in terms of heaven and the heavens, and then in their relation to other human beings, the poem sharpens our idea of an apostle by presenting a shocking picture of a perverted humanity, cut off from the rest of the world by the instinct of self-destruction which in this instance takes the form of homicide and cannibalism.¹⁵ Because the island on which the city of Mermedonia is situated is 'encompassed by enormity' (morðre bewunden, 19b), the sea is implicated as a place of evil, imaging the lack of communication between the Mermedonians and the rest of mankind. Matthew would seem to be in a state of exile on the island not merely from his fellow human beings but also from God. His blindness--the 'stars of his head' (his heafdes sigel, 50b; Brooks, p. 64) are cut out--and his silence in the face of the torture inflicted upon him make this isolation more grievous. It is at this point that the first rhetorical metaphor occurs:

'Hu me elþeodige inwitwasne,
searonet seowað! A ic symles wæs
on wega gehwam willan þines
georn on mode; nu ðurh geohða sceal
dæde fremman swa þa dumban neat.'
(63a-67b)

¹⁴ Charles W. Kennedy, trans., Early English Christian Poetry (London: Hollis & Carter, 1952), pp. 122-67.

¹⁵ Casteen erroneously claims that the cannibalism of the Mermedonians is the 'penalty for the sin of rejecting God's agent' (p. 78). But the poem explicitly states in its introductory lines that it was their 'custom' (beaw, 25b), when there was nothing else to eat in the land, to eat 'any stranger' (æghwylcne ell-ðeodigra, 26).

When Matthew arrives in Mermedonia, the citizens rush out to meet him with spears, bind his hands, and blind him; now he gives expression to this experience. The force of the outrage of his personal values comes out in his cry. A stranger, he was welcomed with malice and given a 'corselet' (searonet) subtly woven with the feondes cræfte (49b). The Mermedonians are thus portrayed as being skilled in their working of strangers' suffering, and their pernicious accomplishment has the additional irony of not being for the apostle's protection or prestige¹⁶ but for his greater discomfort and degradation. The care with which his torture has been executed is a measure of the Mermedonians' commitment to works of evil. Matthew is fettered by their sin, and the endless, callous torture becomes a test of his own commitment to God. But the fibre of his solid loyalty and enthusiastic obedience does not atrophy and collapse under the pressure of hostile physical contingencies. There can be no surrender because Matthew's only possessions are spiritual. Matthew's choice of metaphor to describe his relationship with his tormentors, searonet, forces us to be aware of its various meanings, namely, 'corselet,' 'net,' and 'cage.'¹⁷ Intense feelings are drawn together in these lines by this multiple reference, which illustrates the complexity of Matthew's attitude to the Mermedonians and to his predicament. He is a thane of God (Drihten, 73b), thus deserving only the finest battle-shirt, and more especially because 'him wæs Cristes lof/ on fyrhōlocan fæste bewunden' (57b-58b). But for Matthew the present battle is against

¹⁶ Cf. 'Beowulf maðelode (on him byrne scan,/ searonet seowed smipes orþancum)' (ASPR, IV, 405a-06b).

¹⁷ HMD, s.v. searo and its compounds.

those who revile what he represents. Torture of prisoners is not the customary procedure, it seems; usually, a prisoner is merely blinded and then dosed to turn him into an animal, mentally at any rate, presumably to make him more palatable. But the Mermedonians are thanes of God's enemy (43b) and so they work on Matthew, as he himself says, "'witebendum,/ synne ðurh searocraft'" (108b-09a). The apostle endures a shirt of Hercules, as it were, and the Mermedonians' diabolical actions against him make him feel trapped and victim of their cunning. In another way, the torture is a test of Matthew's capacity for honouring God: that is, whether, in spite of his suffering, he will continue wyrðian wordum wuldres Aldor (55) or whether he will, through pain, utter edwitspræce (81a) against God. Matthew chooses to remain silent and to fix the laudatory thoughts of his heart on God, who knows "'ealra gehygdo,/ Meotud mancynes, mod in hreðre'" (68b-69b). But in doing so, Matthew realises that he becomes something less than human and is depressed beneath his true human dignity. He is painfully aware of the dehumanised state he is forced to endure. Though the magicians' medicine has no effect on his brain, his condition is more pitiable than that of the other 'animalised' prisoners, for whereas they are not aware of their human nature, the torture makes Matthew more acutely conscious of his own debased humanity. Part of the apostle's anguish arises from his being unable to give true expression to his spirituality. His natural environment is paradise as revealed by 'holy powers' (halegum mihtum, 104b), and it is for a fresh vision of its 'radiance' (torht, 105a) that Matthew asks when he prays to be given leoht on þissum life (77a). His physical blindness sets off poignantly his profound spiritual perception. To the apostle, a 'star' of heaven, from whose head the 'lights' have been put out,

com wuldres tacen
halig of heofenum, swylce hadre sigel
(88a-89b)

God communicates with the apostle in the way Matthew is best able to perceive and comprehend the divine will. God's voice is not merely harmoniously organised sound (sweg, 93b) but partakes of the incandescent quality of light as well, and can therefore be described only synaesthetically as a beorht stefn (96b). God's voice is as clearly discernible as is a star, and its 'brightness' brings warmth and comfort to Matthew whose mental gloom suits the Mermedonian society which remains 'strange' and, humanly speaking, incomprehensible to the apostle. It is only because his conception of God is ultimately superhuman that the apostle is able to accept 'hwæs him beorht Cyning, / engla Ordfruma, unnan wolde' (145b-46b). The restoration of Matthew's 'sight' throws into relief the darkness and decadence of his Mermedonian persecutors, whose minds are continually oppressed by the 'darkness' (dimscuan, 141a) of the devil's advice, and the 'vocal' consolation (frofre, 95b) which Matthew receives counterpoints the dissonance of their blasphemy. Like a mariner's cynosure, God is a staðolfæst Styrend (121a), no matter where on the earth's surface the observer may be. The same star shines for all men who have eyes to see it.

The saint, then, is a man whose spiritual faculties keep him in touch with God at all times. Matthew knows that God is in control of things both in heaven and on earth, but he finds it difficult to accept that the dehumanisation of prisoners is God's will, since in their induced 'animal' state the prisoners can no longer worship God either in word or in thought. The introduction of Andreas centres on Matthew's experience of the evil in Mermedonia. The poem pictures him among his fellow human beings and in

communication with God, and the poem thereby insists on the faculty of speech. Apparently, for the Mermedonians, language is one of the chief characterising features of people, for speech is what makes visitors strange to them (cf. ll. 1080a ff.). As an apostle, Matthew is accustomed to utter nothing but praise to God and nothing but encouragement to his fellow-men. In prison, however, he is deprived of this power and is forced to listen to blasphemous execration. A man is seen as a creature whose proper function is to verbalise his spirituality rationally and articulately in honour of his Maker, and so to value the thoughts and humanity of his fellow-creatures. The Mermedonians deny honour to God and consequently violate the humanity of visitors to their city. Speech thus becomes a measure of morality in the poem which, in the prologue (ending at l. 160b), emphasises and establishes the notion of the plastic nature of words which can either enchain or uplift the mind and hence the soul.

Excluding for the moment the poem's major sea-passage, and passing on to the next rhetorical metaphor, we find a development of this theme of evil speech in Andrew's account of some of the miracles Christ performed while on earth. Andrew's account centres on the issue of Christ's divinity (557a-71b), and the poem approaches the subject tentatively, first presenting the case against Christ's being anything more than a man whose parents, far from being divine, were local people whose names were known and who produced at least two other children. The chief priest strives in this way to put doubt into the minds of the disciples by telling them that they live in humiliation and hardship while they publicly aver that they are in the service of a prince. Ironically, this material discrepancy is apparent only to the chief priest and others

like him who are modblinde (814a), and the chief priest's vilification of Christ reflects the moral condition of his mind. Yet it is the cause of this spiritual blindness that is of greater importance, and the poem attempts to describe and define this cause through a combination of some startling rhetorical metaphors. The chief priest's information is not first-hand knowledge but merely what he has learned purh modgemynd (688a), i.e., what he can remember having heard.¹⁸ The chief priest's voice betrays his malicious intent and rancorous envy. The rumours, only partially true, have been propagated by the religious leaders whose aim is to conceal from the people the fact of Christ's power. The 'chain' of blasphemy has come full circle, is endeleas (695a), as it returns to its beginning in the chief priest's own words. The lies have their desired effect and the people are unable to receive Christ's teachings, even when he manifests his power through miracles.

The theme of the moral plasticity of speech is given a new direction in Andrew's account of Christ's display of power both in private (on þam westenne, 699b) and in public (on wera gesyhðe, 705b). The statue to which Christ directs the attention of his audience in the temple in Jerusalem

'is anlicnes engelcynna
 þæs breместan þe mid þam burgwarum
 in þære ceastre is' (717a-19a)

The comparison can have little meaning for the audience because their experience does not include any close knowledge of angels, and so Christ clarifies the association by particularising their concept of angels with details that suggest his own familiarity with angels.

¹⁸ R. K. Gordon, Anglo-Saxon Poetry, 2nd ed., Everyman's Library, No. 794 (London: Dent, 1954), translates this phrase as 'by report' (p. 192). Brooks glosses modgemynd as 'recollection, memory' (p. 156).

Not only does his recognition find concrete expression in the theological names 'Cherubim' and 'Seraphim,' but his acquaintance with their behaviour extends to a further comparison of the statue to a saint (haligra hiw, 725a). The metaphor serves to characterise the concept of sainthood; at the same time, it purports to vindicate Christ's divine origin. Obviously, this intimate knowledge alone is hardly sufficiently verifiable evidence to be convincing and requires corroborative demonstration. This takes the form of a miracle involving speech. Christ commands the statue to come down from the wall on which it is carved and to declare his true nature:

'Stefn æfter cwom
hlud þurh heardne, hleoðor dynede,
wordum wemde' (738b-40a)

The statue testifies to Christ's divinity--"ge mon cigað/ Godes ece bearn" (746b-47a)--but only after it diagnoses that the spiritual faculties of the priests have been disabled by the trickery of their own thoughts. The truth dumbfounds those to whom it is comprehensible, but some nevertheless remain adamant, impervious to the hard reality of the statue's words. Moreover, the speech that issues from the stone cannot be manipulated by Christ's enemies to their own ends. Yet, although they refuse to acknowledge the truth, the highest-ranking priests are not altogether unresponsive to what the statue says, they consequently find disturbing the instability of reality, and so they discredit the spiritual validity of the miracle, attributing it to magic. And it is at this point that the poem exposes the cause of the priests' malevolence:

Man wridode
geond beorna breost, brandhata nið
weoll on gewitte, weorm blædum fag,
attor ælfæle. Þær was orcnawe
þurh teoncwide tweogende mod,
mæcga misgehygd morðre bewunden.
(767b-72b)

This metaphor takes us deep into the mind of the priests, and the chief impression here is of the poetry exploring the abstract nature of their hostility. The idea is spiritual, the subject is hatred.¹⁹ The evil 'swells' with fire, engorging the heart with a burning hatred which quickly 'surges' into the mind from where the verbal attack originates. In the 'flames' of the emotion we glimpse an uncoiling dragon, a horrifying creature that rushes surreptitiously into the cavernous mind and infects it. The recurrence of the phrase morðre bewunden, used earlier to characterise the island of Mermedonia, underscores the isolated self-destructiveness of ill-will and reflects the intensity of the priests' abhorrence of Christ's strangeness, even though, in the chief priest's own words, "'he was afeted on þysse folcsceare,/ cildgeong acenned mid his cneomagum'" (684a-85b). The dissentient priests jealously guard their customary thoughts and unwittingly keep themselves enclosed in misapprehension. They divide the mind of the crowd, and the metaphor suggests that the people who believe the statue will eventually abandon that belief for fear of the priests. The priests' hatred will insinuate itself into the popular mind and utterly destroy its health, 'separating' (tweogende²⁰) the mind from its thoughts. The ambiguous character of self-interest finds expression in the phrase blædum fag, 'adorned with riches' and yet 'deadly with flames,' which points up the deceptiveness of evil. At the same time, in the third possible meaning of the phrase, selfishness reveals itself to be 'destructive to spiritually prosperous life.'

The phrase morðre bewunden also takes us back to the captivity

¹⁹ Cf. Beowulf 1735a ff., where the subject is pride that also wridað (1741a).

²⁰ See G. V. Smithers, 'The Meaning of The Seafarer and The Wanderer,' MAE, 28, No. 1 (1959), 13-14.

of Matthew and to Andrew's present mission to rescue his fellow-apostle. Both have the 'likeness of angels,' and we know now that this refers to an inward quality of the mind, attainable only through the enthusiastic enduring of God's will, which ensures that nothing inimical to human life inhabits the recesses of the mind. But the statue is also dissimilar to both the angels and the apostles, for it remains merely stone and, looked at in this manner, has no real spiritual life of its own. Matthew may feel only half-human because he cannot speak his mind, but he at least has enlivening thoughts. The Jewish elders, on the other hand, have only the external form of saintly men, for not only are they silent when they should be singing praises but incapable of even thinking of godly things. The 'angel' metaphor is related to a most important element in the poem through its blending of the divine will with the human. The very reason for Andrew's mission is part of a plan that baffles human judgement, and Andrew himself questions God's method of freeing Matthew. In addition, like the angels, the apostles are also God's messengers. To strengthen his case, Christ sends the statue to summon Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob before the crowd in the temple in order that the three patriarchs may declare publicly that Christ is the Creator. Yet, as the narrator of these miracles, Andrew realises that truth itself can be unendurable even to a receptive human mind. This partly accounts for the priests' persistent rejection of Christ's teaching, though the deeper reason for their rejection is more private because it is the result of personal error. They "'deofles larum . . . hyrdon to georne"' (611b-12b), and so they are destined to feel the 'fierce fire' (biterne bryne, 616a) of their own hatred. Their evil must inevitably 'consume' them just as the Mermedonians will eventually have to resort to

eating each other.

The main effect of these rhetorical metaphors, then, centres in the contrast between the moral natures of public and private speech. The appropriate public response to divine revelation is silent awe, for words are susceptible of egotistic motives; the only adequate human speech addressed to God is the language of praise. The insidious nature of malicious intentions makes the morality of speech dangerously volatile, especially when the subject of discourse is God and when the mind is contaminated with sin and cut off from the truth.

With the arrival of Andrew and his thanes on the outskirts of the city of Mermedonia, we approach the heart of the poem. Through a powerful rhetorical metaphor, Andrew learns from his thanes that they have had a dream-experience of an aerial voyage to heaven:

'Pa comon earnas	ofer yða wylm	
on flyhte faran	feðerum hremige;	
us of slæpendum	sawle abrugdon,	865
mid gefean feredon	flyhte on lyfte,	
brehtmun bliðe,	beorhte ond liðe,	
lissum lufodon,	ond in lofe wunedon,	
þær wæs singal sang	ond swegles gong,	
wlitig weoroda heap	ond wuldres þreat.	870
Utan ymbe Eðelne	englas stodon,	
þegnas ymb Peoden	þusendmælum,	
heredon on hehðo	halgan stefne	
dryhtna Dryhten;	dream wæs on hyhte.'	

The thanes do not really describe what happened to them (slō userne, 860a) as they intended to do; instead, they merely describe what they saw, and we are left to judge for ourselves that angels were sent to fly them from the ship to Mermedonia, as they did Andrew as well. As the thanes recount their experience they are again 'spiritually transported' by the memory of the angels descending like eagles, with wings fully displayed, to collect their souls. It is the flight, which is made through the storm at sea, that most impresses the thanes, and the implicit strength of the eagles' wings

inspires in the thanes a feeling of ecstatic exuberance. To match this confident tone, the account of the actual flight is cast in a passage of sustained rhyming half-lines with assonance, indicative of the entry into the upper, eternally musical region of the mediæval sky, beyond the dazzling stars reflected in their (beorhte) feathers.²¹ The lines have a heady rhythm all their own, a rhythm that plays so gently on the senses that the celestial music becomes almost substantial. The 'eagles' do not have the conventional horny beak and piercing squawk, nor do they herald bloodshed; they are, in fact, exultant, radiant, and kind companions, couriers full of love and joy, who take Andrew's thanes to the source of angelic voices. One of the thematic functions of this scene is to contrast the religious grossness of the Jewish elders with the spiritual beauty of the saints in heaven: both are called dugoð domgeorne (693a and 878a), but the moral quality of their 'yearning' is vastly different. Surrounding Christ in their thousands, the angels direct their singing towards him 'from outside' in a public act in which all their voices take flyht on lyfte to become one single 'holy voice' of praise. Unlike the deadly utterances of the solitary 'worm,' working in secret to wreak discord upon the thoughts of men, the 'never-ending psalm' (singal sang) of the glorious heavenly choir proclaims the joys of heaven which are the due of all men worthy of them. Later, when Andrew enters the city, he draws strength from the contemplation of heaven, fixing his mind on the ece upgemynd

²¹ Rhyme is a distinctive stylistic feature of Andreas. Other hemistichal rhyming occurs at 887a-88b, 1380, 1404, 1425, 1587, and 1631. M. L. Samuels, rev. of Brooks's ed., RES, 14, No. 54 (1963), mentions phrasal echoes at 27 and 136, 1240b and 1275b, 1248b and 1304b, as well as hemistichal polyptoton at 360a, 615a, 620a, 738a, 1010a, 1192a, and 1385a (p. 175). See, too, Brodeur, p. 104.

engla blisse (1064). On the other hand, the misery of those who do not experience these joys, who are 'strangers' (fremde, 890b) to them, is implicitly 'set down' (witod) and 'broadcast' (geopenad, 889) in the angelic music, for the joy and the music are inseparable, dream having both 'joy' and 'music' as possible denotations (Brooks, p. 92). The speech of Andrew's thanes presents a certainty in the destination of all human souls, be it in triumph or in torment, an inevitability ordained by a God of peace and power, and the style of their speech is patterned and decorative, like a hymn, reflecting a reality of perfect symmetry and beautiful design in which there is a proper place for 'twelwe getealde, tireadige hæleð' (883).

Earthly life is not fully susceptible of the heavenly joys and, unless one continually daydreams, the glory that is to come must properly remain a distant goal. Essentially a man of action, a saint must resist the temptation inherent in his deeper understanding of the world to spend his time merely contemplating the beauties of Creation, yearning for the heavenly joys. Andrew comes to the realisation that, if he is to fulfil his life on earth as a flesh and blood messenger of God, he has to forgo for a time the 'glory' (brym, 884b) of which his thanes speak. This is true despite God's occasional intervention in a saint's life, and this is why the grotesqueness of the whole of Andreas must be seen in its proper perspective: romantic though it may be, it is a reality which Andrew cannot escape. The poem thus subtly explores the relation between the divine and the human in man's nature, and a fortiori the ambiguous nature of sainthood. It is only after this revelation, made through his thanes to whom it remains a 'spiritual mystery' (gastgerynum, 858b), that Andrew is able to discern more deeply the truth of Christ's incarnation and can fully accept his own humanity, with

a better knowledge of what transcends his merely earthly existence and of what martyrdom implies.

How then is the saint to be an efficient medium of God's spiritual truth? The saint must selflessly pursue his earthly life constantly in direct touch with the Divine Mind, yet must not be so preoccupied with it that he neglects his physical being. He must recognise Christ as the 'Comforter' (Geocend, 901a) not only of his own soul but of the soul of every human being (906b-07a), as the source of help and strength, and thus he will be like those who look to God: 'Assument pennas sicut aquilae, current et non laborabunt, ambulabunt et non deficient' (Isaiah 40.31). Worthy of homage and acting as an example to his fellow-men, the saint must himself bring them joy and comfort while he keeps 'in tune' with the heavenly music. He must hold before him his inner vision of the truth and express this knowledge of future joys and of God's creative will in such a way that his fellow-men can themselves perceive something of the divine splendour.

Appropriately, Christ next appears to Andrew in the form of a little boy (purh cnihtes had, 912b). According to Scriptural history, Andrew has already witnessed Christ illustrate the heavenly life by placing a child in the midst of the disciples, saying (in Matthew 18.3-4):

7 cwæþ soþ ic sæge eow nymbe ge ge-werfe beon 7
gefremmende swa cnehtas ne gæþ ge in rice heofunas
. . . forþon swa hwa eadmedað hine swa cneht þios
þe is mare in rice heofunas 22

Humility is obviously the beginning of such a conversion, but a

22 The Gospel according to Saint Matthew and according to Saint Mark, ed. Walter W. Skeat (1887 and 1871; facsim. rpt. 2 vols in 1, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1970), 'The Gospel according to Saint Matthew,' p. 145, Rushworth gloss.

childlike faith or acceptance of God's will is also necessary.

Andrew asks forgiveness for failing to recognise his lord and for talking too much in the presence of his lord when on board ship.

True, Andrew's loquaciousness is hardly culpable since it was Christ who invited him to speak of the miracles, but his failure to recognise Christ is tantamount to being modblind, i.e., spiritually imperceptive to the truth of the gospel, as Andrew himself described the Jewish elders. Yet neither of these misdeeds is as serious as Andrew's initial reluctance to carry out the Mermedonian assignment, an evasive expostulation which amounts to a direct rejection of Christ's authority. When Andrew seeks to escape the mission, the very words of his protest betray his apostatical attitude, for his primary commitment as disciple is to proclaim the gospel throughout the world. In addition to singing God's praise, preaching the good news is in fact the only other kind of public speech sanctioned by Scripture (2 Timothy 4.2). For the first time in the poem, Andrew is incapable of explaining events which he has brought upon himself, and he finds the world incomprehensible:

Feoll þa to foldan, frioðo wilnode
wordum wis hæleð, Winedryhten frægn:
'Hu geworhte ic þæt, Waldend fira,
synnig wið seolfne, sawla Nergend,
þæt ic þe swa godne ongitan ne meahte
on wægfære, þær ic worda gespræc
minra for Meotude ma þonne ic sceolde?'
(918a-24b)

His physical posture dramatises his mental attitude and the style of his speech conveys his awe, but he is on the threshold of deeper spiritual understanding only because he willingly submits himself to his lord's mind. The poetry helps to express Andrew's wonder where, in the contrasting half-lines, his feeble management of his own life is set against God's control of all men; his sinfulness is set against the accomplished fact of the Redemption; his fear of the

sea against Christ's bravery; and his inordinate speech against God's ordered creation. The uncertainty of Andrew's self-knowledge overwhelms his mind to which, in his spontaneous confession, innocence is restored and his thoughts are simplified in the sense that they become 'concentrated in purpose' (anræd, 983a). He is no longer fearful of his inexperience because now he is aware of the uniqueness of his mission, even though he must nevertheless take as his example his lord's innocence, both its humility and its suffering. Christ promises Andrew that he can expect an abundance of suffering--"scel þin hra dæled/ wundum weorðan, wættre geliccost/ faran flode blod" (952b-54a)--but also that through his passion many Mermedonians will be converted to the true Saviour out of whose pierced body real water flowed. Thus Andrew's courage is renewed not merely by his faith in God's control of events but also by the knowledge that he will be fulfilling his fealty to his lord when he proclaims the truth of Christ's heroic redemption to the Mermedonians. This is the implication that Andrew overlooks when Christ first tells him of Matthew's predicament. In his self-centredness, Andrew does not consider the fact that the wickedness of the Mermedonians is, in itself, sufficient reason for his going to the island. Christ's parting words to Andrew make this very point:

'Manige syndon in þysse mæran byrig,
 þara þe ðu gehweorfest to heofonleohte
 þurh minne naman, þeah hie morðres feala
 in fyrndagum gefremed habban.'
 (973a-76b)

When Matthew escapes from prison, leading out the other two hundred and eighty-nine prisoners, men and women, he robs the Mermedonians of all their food and makes it a necessity for them to eat their own people in order to stay alive. The Mermedonian father who offers his own cniht (1121a) to be slaughtered instead of himself

does so, the poem says, lifes to lisse (1111a). The rhetorical metaphor describing Christ as a boy performs an important thematic and structural function in the poem. Christ's reappearance in the form of a child introduces the idea of the child being the image of the father, and Christ's sacrifice suggests the sacrifice of the Mermedonian boy, if only to emphasise the discrepancies between the two. The 'child' metaphor thus relates the Mermedonian culture to Andrew's newly-acquired knowledge of the universality of the Crucifixion. Fully sympathetic, Andrew, now invisible, is moved by the injustice of the killing to make intercession to God for the boy's life:

Hine God forstod,
halig of hehðo, hæðenan folce;
het wæpen wera wexe gelicost
on þam orlege eall formeltan,
by læs scyldhatan sceððan mihton,
egle ondsacan, ecga pryðum.
(1143b-48b)

God's word 'melts' the swords of the Mermedonians and we get the impression of fire and judgement descending upon a heathen people from a holy God. The divine intervention is again exemplary of God's protection, so when Andrew is being tortured we know that God is merely allowing the Mermedonians to work their evil, which will ultimately be rendered ineffectual. The Mermedonian swords lose their 'sharp hardness' (scerp ond scurheard, 1133a) and fail their users. Ironically, each blade itself is 'dappled with burns' (fyrmealum fag, 1134a), suggesting the toughness of the sword (and perhaps its owner) that has withstood the fighting of many battles. All the more effective, then, is the image of the blades dissolving at a mere word from God. Like their weapons, the malice of the Mermedonians will be of little avail against Andrew because they derive their wickedness from Satan, who is their morbres brytta

(1170b). This phrase seems to be an ironic variation of the conventional heiti for a chieftain, namely, sinces brytta (Brooks, p. 103), and it conveys very well the relationship between Satan and the Mermedonians. They have committed their lives to their 'dispenser of death,' are his 'thanes' (43b), and pay homage to him in their cultural behaviour. His 'hold' on them is thus unbreakable except by a breach of fealty. The rhetorical metaphor, then, helps the audience to see that Satan's power becomes as soft as wax before the power of God.

The whole scene--the abortive killing of the innocent boy, the frantic deliberation of the Mermedonian counsellors, and the discovery of Andrew--is built on a structure of irony. Andrew is an invisible observer at the counsellors' conference:

'Ne hele se ðe hæbbe holde lare,
on sefan snyttro! Nu is sæl cumen,
þrea ormæte, is nu þearf mycel
þæt we wisfæstra wordum hyran.'
(1164a-67b)

The Mermedonians are ready to receive the gospel, but Andrew 'conceals' the 'wisdom' he has brought with him until he is drawn out by Satan, who incites the Mermedonians to attack Andrew with the iren ecgheard (1181a). Satan is the first to speak in response to the counsellors' despair, and so they listen all the more eagerly to his voice. Satan's advice is rooted in deception and falsehood, accusing Andrew of being 'the enemy of men' (hæleða gewinnan, 1197b; cf. 1301a) and a clever speaker ('se me on fliteð/ wordum wrætlicum," 1199b-1200a). So Andrew reveals his presence:

'Wast þe bæles cwealm
hatne in helle, ond þu here fysest,
feðan to gefeohte; eart ðu fag wið God,
dugoða Demend. Hwæt, ðu deofles stræl,
lcest þine yrmðo!' (1186b-90a)

But he also makes explicit the connection between the swords and

the 'wax,' and that any attack on him will incur God's judgement. The Mermedonians hear the exchange between Andrew and Satan and, while they remain in their wickedness, they nevertheless receive something of the truth when Andrew shows himself, even though they are able to see him only as a man and not yet as an apostle.²³

The Mermedonian leaders are understandably concerned that the nation is devouring itself, driven to 'live' off their young, in whom is vested the nation's only promise of life. It is a time of cultural crisis when the social norms of a country prove to be inadequate for maintaining individual prosperity of whatever degree. With a good stock of prisoners, the Mermedonians had looked forward to a season of some 'happy feasting' (to wilbege, 153b). The poem makes it clear that the Mermedonians are a 'civilised' people, doomed to extinction through the shortcomings of their own ethical customs, and it is only from the Christian perspective that they can be said to be suffering the nemesis of their immorality. To place their actions within a Christian frame of reference is to point up the universal validity and implication of the Crucifixion, and this the poem does when it says that the Mermedonians nyston beteran ræd (1038b). Cultural aspirations founded on ignorance of human nature lead to national extinction via social pandemonium. The carnival of strangers is never celebrated and the poem uses a stunningly vivid rhetorical metaphor to clarify the fears of the Mermedonians:

Pa wearð forht manig
for þam færspelle folces ræswa,

²³ In the Blickling version, 'S. Andreas,' the devil's 'blindness' to holiness is made explicit: 'Se haliga Andreas him [i.e., to þam deofle] to-cwæð, "Forþon þe þu eart blind þu ne gesiht ænigne of Godes þam halgum"' (The Blickling Homilies of the Tenth Century, ed. R. Morris, EETS, OS 73, London: Trübner, 1880, No. 19, p. 241).

hean hygegeomor, hungres on wenum,
blates beodgastes (1085b-88a)

The conventional image of boisterous and carousing feasting is dramatically reversed in this personification of hunger as 'the blighted table-companion.' The silence in the image is horrifying and the dire reality of the famine is as immediate and urgent to the people as the sudden arrival of a friend, destitute and starving and barely able to speak. But the metaphor has a more gruesome side to it, for the implication is that there is no food with which to relieve even a hungry friend and that, most probably, he himself has dropped in to see whether his friends have not already starved to death themselves, in which case he can eat them. And, of course, any caller would himself be in danger of being eaten. An interesting aspect of the metaphor is the way it brings out the mutual distrust pervading the Mermedonian society; everyone is involved, including the rulers of the people. Hunger is 'the rampant tyrant' (see ðeod-sceaða, 1115b), the product of the Mermedonian civilisation itself, not someone likely to be eagerly 'expected' at a banquet at which there will be no dispensing of treasure (1113b-14a) and at which innocent life will be demanded. There is also the suggestion of the strangeness of the table-companion and with it the idea that the Mermedonians are forced to diverge from their traditional custom by having to entertain a foreigner. Nor is the 'stranger' edible either, nor disposable, but one whose very presence exacerbates their pangs. The 'stranger' remains inaccessible, however, because he is a spectral creature,²⁴ representing the spiritual state of the whole nation and foreboding its death. He is also a daemonic

²⁴ As Brooks notes in his commentary, the scribe confuses giest 'visitor' or 'stranger' and gast 'spirit' (p. 96).

emissary of Satan come to tantalise the people with the greater evil of contravening their own moral code. It is within this context that the emptiness of their idolatry is conveyed by the barren table and the deserted hall (1158b-59a), and when the attempt to kill the boy is thwarted the Mermedonians abandon their 'hellish arts' (1102a) in despair. Their minds nevertheless remain void of the truth that Andrew has come to bring them, though the fearful silence soon becomes swollen with the rage of hunger (1155a-58a).

But in the midst of his ensuing physical suffering, Andrew's mind remains 'insulated' (beseted, 1255a) from the essential evil of his persecutors. The Mermedonians themselves are imprisoned in the unrelieved darkness of their own sin; Andrew has a mind perpetually full of the 'light' of Christ. The poem portrays this tension between Andrew's physical and spiritual states by means of a striking image of winter:

Snaw eorðan band
wintergeworpum; weder coledon
heardum hægelscurum, swylce hrim ond forst,
hare hildstapan, hælða eðel
lucon, leoda gesetu. Land wæron freorig;
cealdum cylegicelum clang wæteres brym,
ofer eastreamas is brycgade,
blæce brimrade. (1255b-62a)

We recall that there is no drinkable water in Mermedonia (21b-23a), but far from being a contradiction this picture of the external universe serves to generalise Andrew's situation to some extent: in winter, all men are 'bound' against their will, their activities and joy in life are denied certain fulfilment, and their places of comfortable refuge become 'prisons.' The rhetorical metaphor, the description of rime and frost as 'abominable marauders' (hare hildstapan), adds to the meaning of Andrew's situation by introducing the notion of a more universal conflict which in fact allies him with the Mermedonians who, by virtue of their humanity, are

themselves prisoners of a kind. Like the earth's vitality, suggested in the 'water's glory,' the life of the Mermedonians has 'shrunk,' for their minds are 'frozen.' Yet, unlike the earth's, theirs is a perpetual condition and their thoughts are inflexible and insensible to warmth. They also suffer the physical pain of being 'caught in the toils of hunger' (hungre gehæfte, 1158a; trans. Brooks, p. 147), their spiritual barrenness finally affecting the more immediate and material regions of their existence. And so long as the sea is un-navigable it will provide no strangers. Caldeheorte (138a) and helplessly bound by their own culture, the Mermedonians epitomise the 'Christless' society.

Contributing to the thematic context of the metaphor is the idea of Satan's imprisonment. Not only does the poem describe him as 'the captive of hell' (helle hæftling, 1342a) but Andrew reminds him of Christ's triumph in hell "'þær þe cyninga Cining clamme be-legde'" (1192), and Satan, too, suffers a time of affliction, "'susle gebunden/ in wræc wunne'" (1379b-80a). Yet, though he is in exile, Satan is still able to direct his pernicious operations against mankind. The apparent contradiction in this state of affairs may be feasibly explained by considering the protean or 'shape-shifting' nature of the soul. Seen within the Teutonic concept of the human entity, Satan

could remain bound in torment while he sent his hamr [i.e., the components of his soul] to the scene of Andrew's difficulties, to inspire his heathen worshipers [sic] with new evil, or to come with six other demonic spirits to attack Andrew's faith. 25

But perhaps it is not necessary to regard Satan as a human being.

25 Rhea T. Workman, 'The Concept of Hell in Anglo-Saxon Poetry before A.D. 850,' Diss. South Carolina 1958, p. 339. See the following note, too.

For one thing, it seems to reduce the fear of hell. Satan is a spiritual being suffering spiritual torments which are comprehensible to men only insofar as they are described in terms of things men know: for instance, we expect the 'fire' of hell to burn more sharply than any fire we have felt before, to inflict more pain than we can physically imagine, for part of hell's horror is the ineffability of its torment. Even more conclusive than the 'shape-shifting' idea is the emphasis in the poem itself on the influence of the spiritual realm on the merely physical, on Satan's power to project his thoughts into the minds of the Mermedonians, who from the beginning of the poem, are prompted to evil by Satan, being under his guidance (20a, 49b, 1195b, and 1297b). If his thoughts are active in the world, they are not working for the good of those who inhabit that world. Moreover, there is within the context of the winter image a concentration on the character of Satan in what amounts to a fusillade of epithets both from Andrew, who calls him "' the murderer of mankind,/ the heir of evil'" (" banan manncynnes,/ facnes frumbearn," 1293b-94a), and from the poet himself, to whom Satan is se atola gast (1296b), wrað warloga (1297a), helle dioful (1298b), atol eglæca (1312a), 'morðres manfrea myrce gescyrded,/ deoful deaðreow duguðum bereafod' (1313a-14b), and ealdgeniðla (1341b)-- deadly, dark, and hostile, these are attributes that relate Satan's attitude and activities to the winter image. Such an affinity generates some obvious cosmic associations. In its winter form, Nature becomes hostile, man's physical environment becomes life-denying, and his only recourse is endurance. Men, inactive or seeking shelter, make the earth's surface look like a 'battlefield' (welwange, 1226a), until the ice 'retreats' with the arrival of the sun. Like the harsh elements, Satan's thoughts can have a numbing

or even deadening effect on the sensibilities of the man whose mind is in the oppressive and self-enclosed darkness of sin and error, until he comes to care little either 'hwylc him þæt edlean æfter wurde' (1228) or 'hu þæs gastes sið/ æfter swyltcwale geseted wurde' (155b-56b). It is the lot of every person ultimately to be 'ice-bound' in his own sin, besieged and battered, and subdued by critical circumstances, to be alone and unable to communicate with other people, having sterile thoughts and no fresh ideas, to be introspective and emotionally fatigued, seeing neither a way out nor any hope of help. This is the condition of the Mermedonians. They are 'prisoners' of a cosmic and spiritual war in which the prize is both land ond leode (1321a); at the same time, because they are carnally minded, Satan can use them as instruments in the campaign on earth to win the whole of mankind. But for Satan, a saint constitutes a point of greatest resistance and menace.

If Satan has physical and human agencies, he also has daemonic ones, and these latter are the apostle's greatest enemies. 'Vicious in his abjection' (1314), Satan comes with seven²⁶ other devilish spirits to cripple with their poisoned spears Andrew's victorious mind. However, Satan's 'glorious thanes' (1329a) do not serve him with the honour proper to the secular heroic lord. "'Ga þe sylfa to,'" they say, after taking flight at the sight of the Cross on Andrew's face (1348b). The change in tactics which they then suggest becomes directly involved with the theme of speech that we have been tracing through the poem. The recommended form of attack is more subtle than the direct assault with spears because its weapons (words) reach their target (the mind) with the help of the

²⁶ Seofona sum = 'with seven (not "six" [as Workman has it]) others' (Brooks, p. 109).

enemy himself, who cannot but hear what is being said. Bound in chains, Andrew is forced to listen to the violent 'shower' of scorn with which Satan tries to 'benumb' his mental strength, like hail 'mocking' the plight of snow-bound people:

'Hwylc is þæs mihtig ofer middangeard,
 þæt he þe alyse of leoðubendum,
 manna cynnes, ofer mine est?'
 (1372a-74b)

Here we arrive at the source of evil as the poem portrays it, for Andrew retorts by reminding Satan of his imprisonment, pointing out the cause of his eternal downfall and its attendant torment:

'Ðu forhogedes Heofoncyninges word.
 Þer was yfles or, ende næfre
 þines wræces weorðeð. Ðu scealt widan feorh
 ecan þine yrmðu; þe bið a symble
 of dæge on dæg drohtaþ strengra.'
 (1381a-85b)

It is all too painful for Satan to bear and he 'evaporates.' The real source of evil in the world is the anarchic mind of Satan, his perverted vision of the truth, which his ever-active thoughts disseminate throughout mankind. His contempt for the righteousness of God increases as the perfection of that righteousness in mankind becomes a nearer reality. Although he has to work his malice within the system of God's natural laws, Creation is his domain, temporarily at any rate. Nevertheless, God can and does intervene in His Creation in order to achieve His love, and this can affect either man or the rest of Creation or both, as it does in the last rhetorical metaphor before the poem's denouement.

The metaphor is more complex than any of the previous ones, and for two reasons. Its form is not that of the straightforward simile, such as 'just like water' or 'just like wax'; nor is it that of the straightforward metaphor, such as 'eagles' (i.e., angels) or 'blighted table-companion' (i.e., hunger). Its form is complex

because its imagery is dependent upon the syntax that frames it:

Pa on last beseah leoflic cempa
 æfter wordcwidum Wuldorcyninges;
 geseh he geblowene bearwas standan
 blædum gehrodene, swa he ær his blod aget.
 (1446a-49b)

Swa 'where' syntactically connects the terrene and the human in a metaphoric relationship dependent upon a subtle germination of life, and the transformation of the landscape is embedded in the syntactic structure itself. At the same time, the imagery is elaborately interlinked with the theme of speech, so that the metaphor constitutes a minor thematic climax in the poem.

Andrew's vision of 'groves in full flower' is a vindication of all his suffering. His own blood takes on a new meaning, imputing a fruitful and even beautiful aspect to his suffering. Andrew now sees himself in relation not merely to the rest of mankind but to God's entire Creation which 'groans' for regeneration (cf. Romans 8.18-25). (Perhaps, in his own mind, Andrew sees blood on the leaves of the trees.) The adornment of blossoms also recalls the image of Andrew's being dragged over the variegated pavements laid by a by-gone generation of men (1234a-36a), once remarkable for their vigour and splendour, but now themselves withered and returned to the earth. The paradox of life-through-death is strongly at work in this metaphor, and one is aware that the regeneration of the sinful Mermedonians has an inestimable cost in terms of human suffering. The Mermedonian countryside of stanhleoðu (1233a) and beorgas steape (1306b) symbolises the adamant hostility and spiritual deadness of the inhabitants. The blossoming groves thus suggest the conversion of the Mermedonians partly through Andrew's blood and partly through God's word. The Mermedonians plan to 'bend' (oncyrran, 1461b) Andrew's 'resolution' (craefta gehygd, 1460b), but they do not reckon

on his fresh knowledge of God's power. Nor do they realise the imperishability of God's word: "ðeos wlitige gesceaft,/ heofon ond eorðe hreosaþ togadore,/ ær awæged sie worda ænig/ þe ic þurh minne muð meðlan onginne" (1437b-40b). Andrew's blood becomes, as Christ said it would, wættre geliccost (953b), irrigating and reviving the hard Mermedonian land, while through par rhyme as well as through metre Andrew's blod is linked with blæd, Nature's life-force. It is, in the end, only God's speech that is creative and life-affirming, so that when Satan chose to despise God's word he abandoned the only source of life. The poem's notion of evil is thus modified, becoming a life-denying consciousness which is itself passing away from God and, in the process, is consuming all the God-given life it can, including its own, before it finally ceases to be alive to God. Andrew's heart is 'bright' with life not simply because his blood has received God's blessing, but because his mind is full of the life-giving words perceived in God's 'bright voice.'

The rhetorical metaphors which we have been analysing establish and inform a context of conflict between life-consuming and life-fulfilling ideas which can possess the minds of men. Thought is silent speech, and a man's soul can be destroyed in the dark, secret places of his mind, beyond the knowledge and help of his fellow-men. It is thus the duty of the saint to bring home to the minds of men the liberating truth about themselves and about their Maker as revealed in the person of Christ. It is in terms of this thematic context that we shall now have to examine the poem's major sea-passage and the rhetorical metaphors it contains.

(11)

Turning to the major sea-passage in Andreas (235a-536b), we

notice that conventional figurative terms for sea and ship abound in the lengthy description of the voyage to Mermedonia.²⁷ Most of this marine and maritime nomenclature does not, however, have any individual thematic valence; rather, the passage appears to be structured round three occasional metaphors to which the associations of the more stereotyped metaphors merely contribute an imagistic and emotional context. Andrew's excitement and enterprise are reflected in the dawn imagery which produces an atmosphere of anticipation through a gradual intensification of selected details. In the first light of morning we see Andrew and his thanes trudging over the dunes, going along the beach. The image is conveyed in a syntax that is most supple, the sentence having a prepositional phrase in each half-line (235a-38a). By contrast, the image of the sea itself is largely auditory--'garsecg hlynede,/ beoton brimstreamas' (238b-39a)--while the preterite forms of the verbs depict the permanence and intractability of the sea as opposed to the easier action of the men, which is reflected in the infinitive gangan (238a). Then, amid the surge's clamour, the increasing light catches the hull of the ship and, finally, as the sun itself arrives, Andrew is able to make out the three seamen:

He ðær lidweardas,
 prymlice þry þegnas mette,
 modiglice menn, on merebate
 sittan siðfreme, swylce hie ofer sæ comon;
 þæt wæs Drihten sylf, duguða Wealdend,
 ece Elmihtig, mid his englum twam.
 Wæron hie on gescirplan scipferendum
 eorlas onlice, ealiðendum,
 þonne hie on flodes fæðm ofer feorne weg
 on cald wæter ceolum lacað.
 (244b-53b)

²⁷ E.g., fiscas bæð (293b), garsecg (238b, 371a, 392b, 530a), hronrad (266a), hwæles eðel (274b); ceol (253b, 256b, 273b, 310b, 349a, 361b, 380a, 450a), flota (258a, 381a, 397b, 487a), fugole gelicost (497b; cf. Beowulf 218b and The Phoenix 585b), hengest (488a, 513b), naca (266b), sæmearh (267a), yðbord (298a).

The juxtaposition of light and dark in 'halig of heolstre, heofon-candel blac' (243) sets the ironic tone of the whole voyage, for throughout it Andrew is 'in the dark,' unable to perceive that he is addressing 'the Holy One' (se halga, 346b), the 'Author of light' (Leohtfruma, 387a). Consequently, the ensuing exchange between Andrew and Christ is qualified by our knowledge both of them individually and of their relationship. Andrew is both a human agency of God's will and a loyal disciple of Christ, attempting to fulfil both responsibilities. The dawn is the start of a new stage in Andrew's life and he accepts the development unaware of God's hidden purposes involved in it. The new day is a reawakening of Andrew's own humanity as he is brought closer to a deeper understanding of his fellow-men.

The three seamen look 'as if they had come across the sea,' i.e., they have the look of experienced sailors. Though a young man, Christ is the seasoned sea-captain, the experienced navigator, and the leader of a crew of hardy sailors, and so convincing is the performance of the three seamen that Andrew, himself no mean a sailor, probably already believes, before he asks, that they will be able to take him to Mermedonia. The sea-captain's response is all the more interesting for being unexpected. Christ's reply is meant to impress rather than to inform and is given in language that connotes vigour, speed, risk, and expanse, and Andrew is suitably 'humble' (eaðmod, 270b) when he asks the trip of Christ merely as a favour, adding, with patent dramatic irony, 'bið ðe meorð wið God' (275b). For the moment, Andrew's reference to payment is ignored; it is the common sense of Andrew's intention to go to Mermedonia that is in question, for if the city is not safe even for experienced travellers, far less can Andrew expect anything there but an unpleasant death. Christ's tone is one of amused surprise and

incredulity with perhaps an undercurrent of persiflage, and Andrew's extreme courtesy in calling the weather-beaten sea-captain his 'dearest sir' (beoden leofesta, 288a) is part of an earnest attempt to convince the sea-captain of his sincerity. Unfortunately, Andrew's choice of the word lust 'desire' (286a) to describe his determination (mycel modes hyht, 287a) prompts the sea-captain to think of money, and he then picks up the word and deliberately uses it in a sense that compromises Andrew: he will be delighted to take Andrew across the ocean to any country where 'interest' (lust, 294b) urges him (Andrew) to go--after he has paid the fare. All along, the sea-captain has been insinuating Andrew's dishonesty. But Andrew, as an apostle, has no possessions with which to arouse the sea-captain's own 'interest,' i.e., his 'worldly desires' (301a-04b), and Andrew's tone has changed to one of indignation when he says the words willan in worulde. The sea-captain's justification of his apparently materialistic attitude is put in the form of a generalised truth which is based on his superior experience of the sea: "'Is se drohtað strang/ þam þe lagolade lange cunnap'" (313b-14b); a man can hardly expect to survive at sea without provisions. It is practical knowledge of this kind that Andrew seems either to lack or simply to avoid. Though Andrew is sensitive to the sarcasm (sarcwide, 320a) implicit in the sea-captain's words, he makes the mistake of assuming that the essential material things of human life--welan ond wiste (318a)--have made the sea-captain arrogant and consequently in need of the statutory warning, that a severe judgement awaits anyone who does not 'welcome an apostle with friendship' (321a-22a; cf. Matthew 10.15). Yet the sea-captain's change in attitude is not an unconditional gesture motivated by fear of damnation, but an agreement dependent upon Andrew's consistent adherence to the Lord's command-

ments, for the sea-captain values those commandments which have brought 'a glorious nobility' (brym, 344b) into his life. Andrew, however, fails to take the world as he finds it and on its own terms; instead, he strives to ignore its claims on him and its possible joy for his fellow-men, assuming that one's only 'wish in the world' should be for 'life in heaven' (in wuldre blæd, 356b).

Confirmation of God's help in his Mermedonian mission comes to Andrew in the concrete form of a huge ship manned by three robust-looking sailors. If Andrew's initial worry was how to get to Mermedonia, inasmuch as the lanes over the high seas were unknown to him (200b-01b), the problem he now faces is to persuade the sea-captain to make the trip. The emphasis in this scene is clearly on the two men's experience of the sea and how it relates to their attitude to the world in which they live. It is the naivety of Andrew's request that makes the sea-captain skeptical of the apostle's motives. The conflicting values define the experience with which we are presented; they produce a tension that sustains the atmosphere of anticipation in the scene and, because they engage aspects of the world we know, they help us to make a valid judgement of their respective protagonists.

Christ the sea-captain deals with Andrew's request in the terms of his own human experience as a sailor: self-preservation and greed. The sea-captain is a man who knows his business in life and who fully accepts the responsibilities of his role as leader of men and as master of the ship, and his verbal exchange with Andrew is, in part, his way of assessing the situation, not merely for the sake of his own calculations, but for the benefit of his crew as well, who may not be keen to repeat the voyage to Mermedonia merely for 'a reward from God.' His vision of the world does not allow him to

lose touch with the realities of the situation in which he finds himself, whether at sea or ashore. Furthermore, as a component in his role, the sea gives the captain a broader view of mankind which enables him to comprehend the universality of men while accomodating their cultural differences within that vision.

Unlike the sea-captain, however, Andrew is unable to connect mentally Achaia and Mermedonia, just as he is unable to appreciate fully the close relation between earthly life and heavenly life. The sea-captain suffers no such disability; he is aware only of a world of men which God has drawn nearer to Himself through Christ, and sees Andrew's mission as part of the spreading of God's glory to all men. In spite of his knowledge that the Mermedonians will torture him and his men to death, Andrew does not fully realise what it entails to proclaim the gospel throughout the world. Sheer determination alone is not sufficient to get the truth across to people who are naturally hostile to the speaker; the wise speaker will give the people a vision of a life irresistibly better than their present one. Commissioned to go among worldly people, Andrew has forgotten what it is like to live in the world merely as a human being without a knowledge of the Incarnation, and he expects all men to have his view that the world is abhorrent and therefore to be desirous of leaving it. He forgets that the people have to be told before they can understand their predicament. He quotes only Christ's instructions, adding no guidance to them. He fails to preach the gospel to the sea-captain and his crew. Fortunately, the captain is not as worldly-minded as he first appears to be. Andrew is thus forced to adjust his attitude not only towards the sea-captain but also towards his fellow-men generally, he is made to see that man's life involves his whole being, and he is shown that all men do not

necessarily have the same experience of the world. God's service entails a knowledge of the material and practical things of the world which include men and money. Andrew is confronted with worldliness on the beach, and he is called upon to deal with it first as a human being and only then as an apostle. Instead of expressing his concern immediately for the spiritual welfare of the people of Mermedonia, Andrew tries to raise his purposes above the level of men by referring the sea-captain to God for the fare. It will not do. The apostle should be an example to his fellow-men by showing that God's service is a proper part of human life in the world. Men should not take to the world for its own sake, but try to enjoy God through it, by living life to its fullest as part of His creation. God is everywhere in the world but, because men have their own attitudes to life, they cannot always see God. In their debased and sinful state, men should be made aware of the worldly possibilities of God's salvation and glory. The poverty of sheer worldliness should be set against the richness of everyday living in the knowledge of God's concrete act of grace. It is the task of the saint to make God's gracious blessing real to men who are ignorant of its existence, and to show that God expresses His care through practical involvement in the affairs of men. Unless the saint sees the world around him as a place which God has decided to glorify through the spreading of His message of love, the saint cannot hope to succeed in his mission.

God's personal and practical involvement in human life in all its aspects makes available His godly powers to everyone who is capable of receiving them, and His participation in the struggles and sufferings of those who do His will has its most vivid expression in battle imagery, in Andreas as in the Bible (e.g., Ephesians 6.13-17).

Any attempt to live as a Christian results in one's life in the world becoming 'a deadly engagement' (niðplegan, 414a) and most bearable only when one serves a lord. During the voyage, the sea becomes like an enemy, full of turmoil and uproar, violence and ferocity, and indomitable with the 'might of legions' (breata bryðum, 376a). Appropriately, the whale thrashes about (plegode, 370b), while the gull circles excitedly (walgifre, 372a). By their fear, Andrew's thanes ascribe to the sea a spiritual significance and relate the storm to their sinful state (407a). Their distress at the thought of leaving Andrew and going ashore springs primarily from their dependence on Andrew for spiritual guidance, but they do not forget their social role; what the 'sons of men' (409b) would think of them for such an action is almost equally important to Andrew's thanes. They are able, as Andrew is not, to see that their actions say as much as their words, that their actions relate them to their fellow-men, and that their own life has meaning and value only as it interacts with the life of the rest of mankind. The practicality of God's involvement in the world is also epitomised in the dramatically ironic heofonlicne hlaf (389a) which Andrew prays God to sustain the sea-captain with. The spiritual sustenance which the saint needs to see him through the trials of a world hostile to his existence can be got only by his acceptance of the common lot of all men to eat of the same 'bread,' since men are able to enjoy, at best, merely the image of heavenly life. Cast within this finely delineated context of the sea-captain's worldly wisdom and the loyalty of his own thanes, Andrew's saintliness is seen to lack the essential earthy humanity of the true saint.

The poem's presentation of the voyage is also critical of Andrew's role as a leader of men. For, whenever he is figured as

lord, we are conscious of an implicit assessment, taking place concurrently, of his service to his own lord, i.e., Christ, but here the sea-captain. This double play of exemplary conduct is expertly captured in the poetry:

Gesæt him þa se halga holmwearde neah,
 æðele be æðelum; æfre ic ne hyrde
 þon cymlicor ceol gehladenne
 heahgestreonum. Hæleð in sæton,
 þeodnas þrymfulle, þegnas wlitige.
 (359a-63b)

Andrew is both beoden and begn, so that the polyptoton (æðele be æðelum) engages both material and spiritual experience.²⁸ Andrew's attempt to console his thanes is out of touch with the realities of their fear, but Christ the sea-captain is alive to their need, and his advice to Andrew comes as guidance from the 'King of heaven' (418a), who has at heart the care of all men, including Andrew. Andrew uses a simple rhetorical metaphor not merely to enliven his story of Christ miraculously calming a storm, but more especially to emphasise the fear of the disciples:

yð oðerre
 brun oft oncwæð
 (442b-43a)

Courage (belief in one's own ability) and faith (belief in God's power and willingness to help if needed) are the two essentials of Christian discipleship in the world, but more than that is needed by the saint, who hears the myriad voices of the world, of unknown multitudes, all afflicted with the same horror of sin and terror of

28 On good semantic and metrical grounds, Gøber takes heah-gestreonum figuratively and regards the 'sublime treasure' borne by the ship as the men themselves (p. 673). He concludes: 'By boldly adapting the peerless vessel formula to his immediate needs, the poet gives his audience a picture of truly incredible wealth: a ship bearing Christ, the holy Andreas, his disciples, and an angelic crew, putting out to sea on a mission of the Almighty's making' (p. 674).

death. In addition, he must be able to tell people their wrongdoings and speak with such authority, conviction, and power that they submit in awe of the truth. He must be prepared to subdue their antagonism with rebuke, yet be perceptive enough to recognise that they are really full of fear, and be able to still the 'murmuring' mass with his hopeful vision of life. Most of the time, the saint meets opposition; his own voice clashes with the world's, people conspire to suppress him, and evil seeks to overwhelm and annihilate him. But he can take comfort from the words of his lord who could say: 'ic forcuom ðone middangeord.'²⁹ When, on the beach in Achaia, Andrew first sees the three sailors, they look as though they have 'come over the sea' (ofer sēs comon), and the irony of the dramatic situation readily activates a tmesis (cf. 1454b). Thus in the visual imagery, too, there is a double layer of meaning which helps to convey the true saint's experience of the world. Andrew has yet to acquire this spiritual double-focus, to 'overcome the sea,' in order to fulfil himself as an apostle.

Dealing with the sea of the world requires skill and experience. One has to realise that a wave in Achaia can 'speak to' a wave in Mermedonia, and that each wave may not 'question' a ship in exactly the same way. Mastery of the sea and understanding of men's speech are metaphorically associated in the poem. The sea-captain's perfect control of the ship makes it glide swiftly yet steadily:

'is þon geliccost, swa he on landsceare
still stande' (501a-02a)

The figure of the sea-captain has now an entirely exemplary function

²⁹ The Gospel according to Saint Luke and according to Saint John, ed. Walter W. Skeat (1874 and 1878; facsim. rpt. 2 vols in 1, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1970), 'The Gospel according to Saint John,' Ch. 16.33, p. 149, Lindisfarne gloss.

as Andrew asks him for instruction in the skills of sailing. It is for the saint to be 'gracious' (este, 483a) of his 'wisdom' (larna, 482b) to those people whom life is wearying and overwhelming but, in order to do so, he must first be able to sympathise fully with them, he must get more than his 'hands wet and cold,' and he must 'go to sea' times past counting (489a-91b), for only complete 'drenching' in the suffering of other men will enable the saint to communicate to them his knowledge of a better life of protection and comfort. He needs to know where men stand in relation to the truth, and this means discovering 'the true meaning of a man's words as the world hears them' ('Æghwylces . . . / worda for worulde wislic andgit,' 508b-09b). The saint's relation to the things of heaven, however, keeps him 'steady' in the midst of the severest assaults, and his knowledge of the truth makes him rædsnotterra and wordes wisra (473b-74a) than any other man. Although all men are in need of the blessing the saint has to give them, not all are aware that they can be helped in their predicament and, consequently, some are hostile to him. Yet, because the world watches the godly man closely, it sees whether or not he himself can 'hold his course.' The world soon realises of course that the saint, the godliest of men, is doing God's will, is 'an excellent thane' (begen gebungen, 528a), and therefore has God's protection. The world then grows silent and listens to the saint's voice. So long as the saint gives himself to the enterprise of helping his forlorn fellow-men to find the hope of a new life, the world, with all its hardship and hostility, cannot entirely hinder him from sharing his gift of the Holy Spirit (530b-31a). The poem's thematic focus is now visible: it is the opposition of evil in the world to the proclaiming and spreading of the gospel. And once we begin to read the poem's major sea-passage

as a metaphoric vehicle whose main informing context is this governing theme, we become more aware of the depth of the experience with which the poem is engaging us.

(iii)

Throughout the voyage, Andrew says nothing of his mission to rescue Matthew. Earlier, Andrew argued that only an angel could make the trip successfully because an angel has a knowledge of the sea 'superior' (of heofenum, 195a) to that of any mortal being. No doubt Andrew did not imagine the angel sailing a ship, but he now knows that expert knowledge of the sea is at least within the range of human capabilities. The sinfulness of Andrew's initial protestation is seen to be its sheer worldliness, and his self-interest is an abnegation of all that he stands for. The desire to preserve himself leads him into the position not only of forsaking his brother doomed to death, but also of withholding the life-giving truth from the Mermedonians. Andrew's reluctance to go is also worldly in its mistrust of God's protection, and it is only through the panic of his own thanes in the storm that Andrew comes to understand his own words when he tells his thanes "'þæt næfre forlæteð lifgende God/ eorl on eorðan, gif his ellen deah"' (459a-60b). The storm helps to install in Andrew the heroic faith we would expect one of the first apostles to have.

In a sense, an apostle hand-picked by Christ himself is an acme of humanity, a source of pride and wonder to the rest of mankind, and the adornment of man's image of himself. The saint, or latter-day apostle, is also meant to guide his fellow-men both to steer them and to let them lay a course by him as they try to steer themselves. He is in the world to preserve those people for whom God

destines a beorhtne boldwelan (524a). The saint's life is his own, though its fulfilment begins only with his acceptance of God's special design of his life, and it is only as he strives to express his own natural will that he can do the will of his Maker, which is to live his life solely for the benefit of others through glorifying God. The saint is especially needed in a situation of distress and spiritual confusion, when directions are not easy to find and a man can suddenly lose himself in fear, for the saint is the one man who never acts without sound purpose. It is because he does not live for himself that the saint can never do anything that would demean his fellow-men, unlike most of us who, in our worldliness, debase ourselves and others. The saint embodies the notion that man's proper happiness is, by participating in God's revelation of His splendour, wisdom, and love, to witness God restoring and perfecting the lives of other men. This would bring most of us into the joy of few people, if any. But the saint has in mind the spiritual welfare of all men whom God puts in his care. Being human, the saint also faces distress, confusion, and fear, but so long as he remembers what in God's eyes he actually means to the world, and provided he continues to impart his vision of God's glory to men, he is able to survive all attempts by worldly men to demean him. The saint's greatest battle is preventing God's beorht stefn from becoming either darkened by the sin of the world or shut out by the world's clamorous claims.

What Andrew and the sea-captain say is, of course, also qualified by Matthew's predicament. Matthew's suffering is beyond Andrew's experience, and Andrew recites rather glibly Christ's commission to the first disciples (332a-39b). It is Andrew who is seriously 'blind,' and he is culpable to the extent that it is his

own self-centredness that does not permit him to penetrate Christ's disguise. Later, on the beach in Mermedonia, Andrew acknowledges this 'blindness' as a sin, asking remorsefully:

'Hu geworhte ic þæt, Waldend fira,
synnig wið seoline, sawla Nergend,
þæt ic þe swa godne ongitan ne meahte
on wegfare . . . ?' (920a-23a)

Yet this is not so grave a sin as his opposing God's command that he rescue Matthew his brother-apostle. Matthew's blindness, on the other hand, is a manifestation of the evil pervading Mermedonia. Again, Matthew has greater strength of mind than Andrew, purposefully fixing his thoughts on God's power--God is "'middangeardes Weard"' (82a)--and not on his own human weakness and inadequacy. Andrew, betraying a deficiency in his vision of the truth, fails to realise the magnificent power of God's promise to help those who 'cry out' (clypian, 450a) in their need. By sending Andrew to rescue Matthew, Christ is fulfilling his promise to his disciples to 'keep' them 'in peace' ("ic eow freoðo healde," 336b) and yet, in spite of the intensity of the evil, Matthew remains utterly obedient to his Drihten (73b), dugeða Dædfruma (75a). Andrew seems to have forgotten that "'God eaðe mæg/ heaðoliðendum helpe gefremman"' (425b-26b), and that this applies equally to both the rescued and the rescuer, to Matthew and to himself. What makes Andrew's protestation so sinful is its implicit denial of God's power to keep His word and to fulfil His own will (932b-35b).

Often, evil will seem to be successful and capable of obstructing good in every encounter between the two. Satan is in control of the Mermedonians and appears to be directing their destiny. The Mermedonians themselves, however, are blind to the humanity they share with the strangers whom they kill. Their evil makes them a world unto themselves, but their survival is precarious because they

are not aware of the dangerous imminence of famine. They are so preoccupied with their present well-being that they cannot see that their way of life could eventually become grievous, as there is no bread or water for human consumption on the island. They have been misguided by Satan into believing that human flesh and blood are sufficient. Unlike the sea-captain, the Mermedonians have no international sympathy, they show no interest in the language or culture of other people and, consequently, their 'worldly wisdom' is limited to the exclusive gratification of their own needs. Their flagrant hostility towards strangers causes all men alarm but, because the Mermedonians are nevertheless human beings, it is still possible for them to become 'timid in awe of the Lord' (457), and this possibility is the basis of Andrew's eventual hope. It is only by mastering the world, by negotiating its circumstances and contingencies, and by coming to terms with the experience of this life on earth, that a man can know how close he is to the heavenly life. This does not mean, of course, that Andrew must likewise eat human flesh in order to sympathise fully with the Mermedonians and to demonstrate his human similarity with them. On the contrary, it is the saint's task to use their sin in order to highlight the disparities between himself and them by manifesting God's power in human terms, so as to show that their sin separates them from the greater joy of a transcendent reality. Like Christ, the saint does not need to sin in order to identify himself with sinners, and in fact to do so would defeat the purpose of his holiness, which is to show sinners their better potentialities as human beings, for the success and happiness that sin brings is only apparent and merely ephemeral. It is as a man's life is in touch with the eternal realm that his earthly life has its fullest meaning and joy.

The original occasion of Matthew's imprisonment is, ultimately, Christ's commission to the first disciples to go "'geond ginne grund gasta streonan"' (331). Like Matthew, Christ entered a world that was enclosed with the feondes facne (20a), coming like the sun 'in holiness out of darkness' (halig of heolstre, 243a), in order to proclaim the beorhtne geleafan (335b) to the inhabitants of that world. Christ brought the gospel to mankind, spread the 'glorious' good news that there are eternal joys in heaven for every human being who has the faith to believe him to be God's son, and he performed many miracles to show his divine kinship. Yet, despite his unique contact with heaven, he was never out of touch with the realities of the physical world, for he "'acenned wearð/ to hleo ond to hroðre haleda cynne,/ eallum eorðwarum"' (566b-68a); that is to say, he understood so profoundly the material susceptibilities and needs of human kind that he was able to 'protect' and 'comfort' all men throughout the earth. Ironically, Christ's genuine humanity was the ground of the opposition to the gospel he taught. The Jewish elders argued that he was so recognisably human that he could not be divine, but his followers found in his ideas and powers the very proof of his divinity. At times, the threat of the Jewish malice to Christ's life 'hovered' (upp astod, 443b) and made his ministry of the gospel 'dangerous' (Frecne, 440b). Their scornful rumours 'beat' (beoton, 442a) on his mind and on the faith of his followers, turning some of them into 'anxious doubters' (forhte on mode, 448a). The Jewish elders tried to 'hide' (dyrnan, 693b) Christ's majesty beneath their 'mountainous' (firigend-, 390a) falsehoods and 'booming' (oft oncwæð, 442b) blasphemy. They rejected the gospel because they could not accept the divinity of Christ, who advocated the rich experience of human life full of transcendent intentions. As Andrew

himself puts it:

'us wuldres Weard wordum ond dædum
 lufode in life, ond þurh lare speon
 to þam fægeran gefean, þær freo moton
 eadige mid englum eard weardigan,
 þa ðe æfter deaðe Dryhten secað.'
 (596a-600b)

Christ's majestic bearing in the presence of the multitudes, his gentle voice, and his authoritative words reduced the opposition to a timid silence. At the same time, his followers rejoiced with new assurance (mod ahloh, 454b) that he was the Lord of heaven and earth.

Although Christ came from heaven to redeem mankind, he spoke in simple, realistic language and his 'worldliness' was of the essentially practical kind, comprising a firm grasp of the necessities and conditions of his mission. To all appearances, he was born of flesh-and-blood parents, had brothers, and so his humanity was never in dispute. The hostility he faced sprang from the clandestine plotting of the Jewish elders, who tried to stir up the multitudes against him. But he understood not only their worda for worulde (509a) but also their inward words, and could 'rebuke' (breade, 452b) the elders and 'still' (stilde, 451b) the people with manifestations of his divine power. And all those whose 'minds rejoiced' (454b) at the sight of the multitudes 'in awe of the Lord' (457b) believed in the 'joys of heaven' (swegles dreamas, 809b). Part of Christ's mission was to glorify God in his passion and heroic death, in which he was never driven to desert God by the 'loud' importunities and 'pressure' of his persecutors; but he also endured the 'storm' of afflictions in order to set his disciples an example. Far from committing the same evil as the heathen, then, the saint should accept his 'worldliness' by suffering the torment that the sin of the heathen leads them to inflict upon him, for in this way the saint demonstrates the loathesome effect of sin on the good

and godly man.

Matthew suffers similarly the consequences of the Mermedonians' sin which, in addition to the merely physical torments, take the form of insults (hearmcwide, 79a) and blasphemy (edwitspræce, 81a). But, like the Jewish elders, the Mermedonians know no better because they have been beguiled by Satan into an attitude towards their fellow-men that renders their minds incapable of accepting the gospel. Ironically, the basis of the Mermedonian civilisation excludes the gospel which itself takes into account the conditions of all human civilisations. It is because they cannot recognise the true nature of strangers that the Mermedonians anathematise themselves in the world, that they undervalue human beings, and that they can comprehend neither the motive nor the purpose of the gospel. They fail to perceive that Matthew has special human features which distinguish him from the other prisoners and, to the Mermedonians, he is simply another 'stranger.' Nor do they apprehend Matthew's power to free them from their own imprisonment, but, at Satan's instigation, they greet him with violence. Their minds become 'overcast' (swearc, 372b) with anger and their malicious thoughts 'grind' (grundon, 373b) on each other as the Mermedonians 'surge' around Matthew 'in an uproar' (styredon, 374a). However, though his assailants are 'bloodthirsty' (walgifre, 372a) and press about him with terrible weapons (breata bryðum, 376a), and though they remove his eyes, the 'suns of his head' (his heafdes sigel, 50b), Matthew never turns 'cold with fear' (acolmode, 377a) or loses his hope or vision of who is in control of the situation. Severely tested with the venomous potion, Matthew remains faithful to his hlaford (405b) and continues to glorify God in his mind, even though he is 'sorrowful, ill-favoured, and wounded by sins' (406a-07a). In the darkness, Matthew hears the Mermedonians

plotting to kill him, but in his mind God abides 'in brightness' (beorht basnode, 447a), and his call to God is answered like the dawning of the sun after a long night. God 'puts to rest' (533b) Matthew's fear and sadness, and then raises his spirit with the promise of coming rescue and the assurance of a place in heaven. Matthew's mind is refreshed and alert, accepting God's will and disdaining the clamour and pressure (495b-96a) of the Mermedonians when they come to inspect him in prison after deciding which prisoners are to be eaten. Matthew is again able to praise God and in this way 'to pass through the peril' (frecne geferan, 516a) until rescued by Andrew.

But if Matthew is in need of comfort, so are the Mermedonians. Like the Jewish elders who, though they saw Christ perform many miracles, were mentally quite 'blind' to his divinity, the Mermedonians are unaware of Matthew's apostleship. Their isolative civilisation, their hostile attitude towards the rest of mankind, and their ignorance of the fate of the human soul (154b-56b) are all symptomatic of the spiritual need of the Mermedonians, and their situation is the more lamentable because it is a self-imposed exile. The escape of their 'food' is a national crisis only because they also have a limited view of their own human condition, a view that has been acquired from Satan's fallen vision of true values. Yet even though the Mermedonians exploit their fellow-men unwittingly, they cannot avoid the results of their actions: the debasement and subversion of their own humanity. Consequently, the Mermedonians, though they do not realise it, are in need of the gospel which Matthew came to proclaim to them and which Andrew succeeds in doing once he realises and accepts that his suffering is an essential part of the re-forming of the mental state of the Mermedonians, and

is ready to communicate the gospel as effectively as he can.

Andrew's invocation of the Decalogue--"ryhte æ/ getacnode on tyn wordum,/ Meotud mihtum swið" (1511b-13a)--introduces the two-fold function of the gospel: to convict men of sin and to lead them to a saving faith in Christ. By a reasoning analogous with Tertullian's argument concerning the water of baptism, the words of the law, originally inscribed on tablets of stone, are 'written' upon the column of marble, which is a species of stone.³⁰ So the flood can in a sense be said to issue from the law. Furthermore, though the flood is not, strictly speaking, the sea itself, it is nevertheless explicitly referred to as geofon (1508a, 1531a, 1585b) and mereflod (1526a), it has the sea's characteristic expansiveness, force, and noise, and, within the context of the metaphoric sea-passage, acquires a spiritual import. One of the poem's earlier significations of the sea was to the sinfulness of human nature, and this is the meaning of the water that gushes forth from the marble column:

Næs þa wordlatu. wihte þon mare,	
þæt se stan togan. Stream ut aweoll,	
fleow ofer foldan; famige walcan	
mid ærdæge eorðan þehton,	1525
myclade mereflod. Meoduscerwen wearð	
æfter symbeldæge; slæpe tobrugdon	
searhæbbende. Sund grunde onfeng,	
deope gedrefed; duguð wearð afyrhted	
purh þæs flodes fæf. Fæge swulton,	1530
geonge on geofone guðræs fornam	
purh sealtas swelg; þæt was sorgbyrþen,	
biter beorþegu. Byrlas ne gældon,	
ombehtþegnas; þær was ælcum genog	
fram dæges orde drync sona gearu.	1535

The images cohere with the poem's theme of the gospel and follow the basic Pauline doctrine that the law, though itself holy, aggravates a man's sinfulness and in that sense may be said to 'kill' his soul, for it is 'through the commandment' (per mandatum) that sin becomes

³⁰ See above, Ch. 4, p. 157, and Brooks, p. 113.

'sinful beyond measure' (supra modum peccans, Romans 7.13).

The sinfulness of the Mermedonians is depicted poetically as ineluctably growing to a fatal excess. The image of the flood as sea water enriches the context with connotations of obstreperous waves which 'speak' to one another, and our response is modified as the significance of the image is modified within this new context. The waves represent the content of the 'words' written on the column and bring an awareness of death, as the law brings the knowledge of sin (Romans 3.20). The law defines sin inasmuch as it is only out of the law that sin can materialise; the very mention of the sin reifies its deadliness (Augustine, De Spiritu et Littera, Ch. 14.23). But the description of the flood is caught up in the context of the Mermedonians' feast and, in the rhetorical metaphor 'a burdensome brew, beer hard to swallow' (sorgbyrben,/ biter beor-
begu),³¹ the flood is also figured as a beverage. Typically, feasting is an occasion of music, song, and laughter, followed by a general collapse into sleep. It is impossible to rule out the unmistakable element of humour in the image and, when it alludes to the cup-bearers expeditiously supplying the revellers with plenty of fresh 'drink,' the poem is insisting that we take such humour into account in our response to the metaphor. The image of cup-bearers may be intended merely to clarify the beer metaphor, by meiotically suggesting either the sheer quantity of the 'burdensome brew' or the fact that the Mermedonians do not actually have any cup-bearers (see Brooks, p. 115). On the other hand, it may also be an allusion to the bodies of their children (geonge) that are

³¹ Brooks comments: 'all editors translate 'a burden of sorrow'; but this gives poor sense. It is preferable to take byrben as a metathetic form of bryben 'brewing'' (p. 114).

described as being swept along by the flood. By means of these ambiguities, the poem manages to temper the humorous strain in the metaphor with graver overtones, to make it 'bitter.' Though the Mermedonians cannot have had much to eat, they seem to have had too much to drink, oblivious of their material and spiritual predicament. There is, too, the implication that their sinfulness is a state of intoxication induced by Satan's 'brew,' that they no longer have control of their own minds,³² and that their merriment is not genuinely invigorating, but doing them more harm than good. Alcoholic liquor dissipates the imbibers' ability to know himself and his fellow-men for what they are, it deceives him into accepting a pleasurable release from hard reality in exchange for his power to reason and to think clearly and responsibly, and it removes the desire to become absorbed in the appreciative contemplation of a benign environment. What might be enjoyed in a light-hearted manner assumes serious implications in the poem. Like that of all alcoholic liquor, the effect of Satan's 'brew' is only temporary and has the dire consequence of hell's 'bitter fire' (biterne bryne, 616a). What might be a time of blissful and restorative repose becomes a moment of meoduscerwen 'panic and pandemonium,' when the 'mead,' the essence of the feast, is 'scattered' and the sweetness of the festive joy is soured, becomes 'bitter,' and thus the flood serves further to convey the sense of the Mermedonians' folly in following Satan.³³

³² As Riddle 27 ['Mead'] says, 'Sona þæt onfindeð, se þe mec fehð ongean [þæt] . . . nah his modes geweald.' 'The person who takes me on will at once find it out [that] . . . he has no control of his brain' (ASPR, III, 9a-14b).

³³ Jackson J. Campbell sees this whole passage as 'a well-conceived bit of sustained irony,' in which the poem 'sarcastically contrasts the Mermedonians' death by water and the happier circumstances of receiving liquid on a symboldeg' (rev. of Brooks's ed., JEGP, 62, No. 3, 1963, 680).

There is, then, also a pathetic side to the image of the flood, in that the poem keeps before our attention the fact that the Mermedonians are human beings desperately in need of God's mercy. Instead of the sound of music and joyous voices there is a 'sorrowful' resonance counterpointing the 'terrible cacophony':

Ðær wæs yðfynde innan burgum
geomorgidd wrecen, gehðo menan
forhtferð manig, fusleoð galen.
Egeslic æled eagsyne wearð,
heardlic hereteam, hleoðor gryrelic;
þurh lyftgelac leges blæstas
weallas ymbwurpon, wæter mycladon.

Ðær wæs wop wera wide gehyred,
earmlic ylða gedræg (1547a-55a)

The predominant tone of the whole flood-image is pointedly ironic and this helps to direct our understanding of the poem's presentation of the gospel theme.

The 'blanket' of fire, which the angel casts about the city, heats the water inside, making it 'fierce' (hreoð, 1542b) and 'turbulent' (beatende, 1543a), and consequently presents a picture of the Mermedonians themselves being cooked within the 'cauldron' of their own city. The apocalyptic description rapidly alternates between the flood inside and the fire outside, and is strong in auditory and visual effects which vividly convey the spiritual action of the gospel on the minds of the Mermedonians as they come to the realisation both of their own sinfulness and of the holiness of Andrew, whose mind they planned to pervert (mod oncyrran, 1461b), presumably by means of an atres drync (53a). With sharp and forceful irony, the Mermedonians, whose mental faculties have been beguiled and perverted by sin, themselves receive a drync unheorne (34b) which enables them soð gecnawan (1558b). The power of the gospel to convict the human mind of sin has had its full effect when the repentant Mermedonians realise that their situation amid

sin's 'tumultuous sea' (lagu lacende, 437a) is 'perilous' (Frecne, 440b), and when they acknowledge their need of the 'help' (helpe), 'comfort' (geoce), and 'consolation' (frofre, 1566b-67a) of the apostle's power to still the 'storm' (yst, 1586b). The action of Andrew's supernatural power in destroying 'the worst of the crowd' (1592) widens the Mermedonians' awareness of their sin and its consequences: 'guilty of taking human life' (morðorscyldige, 1599b) they acknowledge their responsibility to their Creator, 'King of all creatures' (Cyning eallwihta, 1603a), to whom all men are of worth, and decide to obey Andrew eagerly 'in a manner befitting human dignity' (gumcystum, 1606a), for men glorify God most when they are most human. Yet Andrew's very existence as an apostle, as a holy person, testifies to the possibility of there being drink of 'the better kind' (þa beteran gecynd, 588b), a spiritual beverage offered by God Himself, the effects of which may be seen in the lives of the 'revellers' who, as they are described in Psalm 35:

9 beoð druncnode of genihtsumnesse huses þines 7
 of burnan willan þines þu drencst hy 10 forþam
 mid þe is [fons] lifes 7 on leohte þinum [w]e
 geseoð leoht 34

From the draught of that fountain alone, Augustine comments, 'justitia bibitur, bona scilicet vita,' and by that light 'anima rationalis quodam modo accenditur ut sit etiam ipsa factum creatumque lumen.'³⁵ Through Andrew, God makes known that it is His drync that justifies

³⁴ The Vitellius Psalter: British Museum MS Cotton Vitellius E. xviii, ed. James L. Rosier, Cornell Studies in English, No. 42 (Ithaca, N. Y.: Cornell Univ. Press, 1962), p. 83.

³⁵ '[is imbibed] the righteousness which is good life'; 'the reasonable soul is as it were set burning so as to be itself a light made and created.' De Spiritu et Littera, Ch. 7.11, PL 44. 206; trans. John Burnaby, Augustine: Later Works, The Library of Christian Classics, Vol. 8 (London: SCM Press, 1955), p. 201.

sinful human beings, is freely available, and is ælcum genog. This is the poem's major thematic climax when, through the spirit of grace, men are reborn into a world of faith in Christ, here portrayed by the resurrection of the Mermedonian children (eaforan unweaxne, 1627a). When Andrew says "'eow is wuldres leoht/ torht ontyned, gif ge teala hycgað"' (1611b-12b), he gets the Mermedonians to turn their minds to Christ by means of his intercessory prayer for the lives of their drowned children. It is an act of the will, which 'adjuvetur et erigatur impartito spiritu gratiae',³⁶ and leads to the total conversion of the Mermedonians (1636a-42b). From the illumination of the besieging fire comes their inner sight, and their recognition of the light of truth within the apostle replaces their spiritual blindness. Finally, to complete the conversion of the Mermedonians, Andrew obeys God's commandment to remain among them for a week, and he 'establishes' (fæste getimbre, 1671b) God's name, not in tablets of stone, but in the fleshly tablets of the Mermedonians' hearts (2 Corinthians 3.3). Also, he increases their Christian knowledge through encouragement and guidance on geleafan weg (1680b) leading to such higher regions of doctrine as the Trinity (1684a-85b).

The concluding images of Andreas are deliberately concerned with the sea and, in them, the two main lines in the theme of the gospel, the worldly and the heavenly, converge in order to present, in a new way, the conventional contrast between the alternative destinations of the human soul, i.e., between heaven and hell.

ongan hine þa fýsan ond to flote gyrwan,
 blissum hremig; wolde on brimbisan
 Achale oðre siðe
 sylfa gesecan, þær he sawulgedal,
 beaducwealm gebad. Pæt þam banan ne wearð

³⁶ 'is aided and uplifted by the imparting of the Spirit of grace.' Ibid., Ch. 12.20, PL 44.212; trans. Burnaby, p. 209.

hleah tre behworfen; ah in helle ceaf
 sið a sette, ond syððan no,
 fah freonda leas, frofre benohte.
 (1698a-1705b)

These two continuities which are encapsuled in the poem's thematic metaphor--brun oft oncwæð/ yð oðerre--relate the theme to the universal reality of human death. Unregenerate man, represented here by the apostle's slayer, passes miserably 'into the mouth of hell,' the source of the world's evil speech and, in terms of the poem's figurative context, situated at the bottom of the sea, a place of darkness and loneliness, in which a solitary voice will continually call to another but never communicate with another mind, since it is only its own echo that it hears. On the other hand, the sea of death is halcyon for the Christian, represented here by the apostle, who has been an 'agile fighter' (wigan unslawne, 1711b) until his death. The 'darkness' is, here, in the hearts of those bereaved of the dead man's 'radiance,' hearts that are 'turbulent' with sorrow. Then, after openly lamenting in unison the burial ship taking him beyond their reach and out of sight, the mourning multitude breaks into the halleluia with which the poem ends:

'An is ece God eallra gesceafta'
 Is his miht ond his æht ofer middangeard
 bre me gebledsod, ond his blæd ofer eall
 in heofonþrymme halgum scineð,
 wlitige on wuldre to widan aldre,
 ece mid englum; þæt is æðele Cyning!'
 (1717a-22b)

The lamentation on the shore lasts until the ship disappears, and then the poem's focus sweeps quickly upwards, touches on God's glory in the world, and comes to rest in heaven, where the poem began. Implicitly, the apostle crosses the sea of death, sails back to heaven, and becomes a saint, taking his place to share in the radiance of the firmament, its heavenly majesty and beauty. Heaven, then, is the ultimate source of the gospel, and those who proclaim

it in the world serve the æðele Cyning of heaven with 'brightness.' While he is in the world, however, the true Christian can reflect God's image only imperfectly, and it is only as he continues to grow out of the worldliness (i.e., distraction by his own self or by the world itself), through trial and conviction, that his last journey across the sea can be a successful one.

(iv)

But it is of some importance at this point to establish precisely what is meant by 'God's image.' The mediaeval concept of it was probably influenced, if not formed, by the philosophy of human nature incidentally expounded in Augustine's treatise on the Trinity, to which, though it will not interpret the poem for us, it is reasonable and possibly fruitful to turn for a while. The De Trinitate is a post-Nicene work, i.e., it assumes the true divinity of the man Christ--a key issue in Andreas--and, in the first seven books, it follows the conclusions of the Cappadocian Fathers, that in the Godhead there subsist three personae or hypostases, each having the essential divine nature, and together being inseparable in what they do and in what they are. In the remaining eight books of the treatise, Augustine attempts a more introspective or 'psychological' approach to an understanding of the Trinity, taking as his basic premise the Scriptural truth that, of all Creation, man alone is created in the image of the triune God (Genesis 1.27), which does not mean that man was made in the image of God according to his physical form, but that the closest image of God is to be found in the human mind or rational soul (rationalis mens, Bk 12.7.12, CL 50.366). We shall pass over the niceties of Augustine's supporting argument for this conclusion, confining ourselves to what is rele-

vant to an interpretation of Andreas, viz., the effect of sin on human nature, and the redemptive action of the Incarnation. These may be briefly discussed under three convenient headings: human nature, knowledge of the world, and knowledge of God.

Human nature is made up of an inner and an outer person, a life of the spirit and a life of the senses. The life of the spirit exists in the rational soul or mind, which is also a duality, having a higher and a lower rationality. Both higher and lower rationalities belong to one mind and are married in one image of God, differing merely in function. The lower rationality is there to help the mind to deal with the sensible world and to direct the life of the senses, and so it is an essentially active function of the mind. It is for the higher rationality, on the other hand, to evaluate (iudicare) the sensible world according to spiritual criteria, since it is primarily a contemplative function of the mind. Thus the higher rationality enables the mind to contemplate its intuitive knowledge of eternal things, while the lower rationality enables the mind to enact its inquired knowledge of the world (Bk 12.1.1-3.3).

Although the mind's action partially diverts it towards the outside world, such action is nevertheless virtuous when it uses worldly things ad illa bona aeterna 'for the attainment of those good eternal things' of heaven, which the mind can perceive only in contemplation (Bk 12.14.22, CL 50.376). A man's behaviour, then, is virtuous only so far as the lower rationality refers temporal things to the higher rationality, only so far as the mind acts with the contemplation of attaining the eternal things. And all depends on the mind's having the power to contemplate its knowledge of righteousness (Bk 8.6.9, Bk 12.11.16), for there is the danger that the more the mind acts in order to attain temporal things, the more

it loses its power to contemplate the eternal ones, such as righteousness. And without a knowledge of righteousness it is impossible to live righteously, for it is only by referring his knowledge of the world to his knowledge of righteousness that a man can avoid evil in the world.

Secondly, knowledge of the world is a vision of merely temporal things, and so it is, in itself, incapable of supplying a cognisance of eternal things. Yet from this vision of temporal things arise those images that materialise in mental or vocal speech and that precede all human actions: 'Nemo enim aliquid volens facit quod non in corde suo prius dixerit.'³⁷ The heart of a man has a 'mouth' and what comes out of it can defile him, for it is from the heart that evil thoughts proceed (Matthew 15.10-20). This mental image or inner 'word' is conceived by the desire or 'love' for either the temporal or the eternal, and is expressed in the form of thought, speech, or action. Now, a 'word' is true only when it images what is known, and so it is possible for such a 'word' to be false when one speaks out of ignorance, when one is mistaken or deceived, or when one is wilfully lying. Thus, since 'words' are the source of actions, it follows that a knowledge of good works can lead through true 'words' to the performance of good works, while falsehood can lead a man to sin and bad works.

Finally, a man's knowledge of God will thus determine his morality. So long as a man knows and loves righteousness, even though he does not show it in deeds, he is none the less righteous, since we are all characterised by what we know and love (Bk 9.9.14). This

³⁷ 'No-one does anything deliberately that he has not previously spoken in his heart.' Bk 9.7.12, CL 50.304; trans. Burnaby, p. 66.

has an important corollary: a 'word' that is conceived from a man's knowledge of God transforms that man's mind, effecting in him an image, albeit an inferior one, of God. Sinfulness, then, is the possession of 'words' conceived by the love of temporal things alone, to the exclusion of God. Although man never quite lost his knowledge of righteousness, he nevertheless lost his own righteousness when, through sin, the human mind lost its original power to contemplate its knowledge of that righteousness.

Only God the Creator can restore that power, and this He has already done through an act of grace in the Incarnation. Although God's image has become defaced or faded through sin, it remains indelible so long as man has some ability to use his intellect to perceive God, and, because the mind is an image of God, it ultimately has its being in Him and is able to remember Him. The knowledge that God entered the world to die to save unrighteous men from certain death energises, with love, the mind's former power to contemplate its knowledge of righteousness; that is, since Christ is the temporal image of eternal righteousness, a man's responding love for the righteous Christ helps him to image his own 'forgotten' knowledge of righteousness: 'Homo ergo qui creditur iustus ex ea forma et veritate diligitur quam cernit et intellegit apud se ille qui diligit.'³⁸ That is the main effect of the Incarnation, through which men once again participate in the righteousness of God, to whatever degree each is able to discern it. For it is only by Christ's righteousness that the human mind 'commemoratur ut

³⁸ 'The man who is believed to be righteous is loved according to that pattern and truth which the lover discerns and appreciates within himself.' Bk 8.6.9, CL 50.283; translation mine.

convertatur ad dominum.³⁹

As man, Christ died, but, because he was sinless, death could have no hold on him, and so his righteousness defeated Satan's purpose to capture human kind in the bonds of physical death. When Satan slew Christ with the iniquities of mankind, sin took its full and final toll of humanity. As God, however, Christ overcame the death of the body by rising again, and though men continue to endure physical suffering and to undergo death, yet Satan has lost his claim on the souls of men:

Diabolus enim a dominatu et a cordibus fidelium foras missus in quorum damnatione atque infidelitate licet damnatus etiam ipse regnabat, tantum pro conditione mortalitatis huius adversari sinitur quantum eis expedire novit [ille] . . . Prosunt autem ista mala quae fideles pie perferunt vel ad emendanda peccata vel ad exercendam probandamque iustitiam vel ad demonstrandam vitae huius miseriam ut illa ubi erit beatitudo vera atque perpetua et desideretur ardentius et instantius inquiratur. 40

³⁹ 'can be so reminded as to turn again unto the Lord.'
Bk 14.15.21, CL 50A.450; trans. Burnaby, p. 119.

⁴⁰ For the devil being cast forth from his dominion, and from the hearts of the faithful, in the condemnation and the faithlessness of whom he, although himself also condemned, yet reigned, is only so far permitted to be an adversary according to the condition of this mortality, as God knows to be expedient for them . . . And those evils which the faithful endure piously, are of profit either for the correction of sins, or for the exercising and proving of righteousness, or to manifest the misery of this life, that the life where will be that true and perpetual blessedness may be desired more ardently, and sought out more earnestly.

Bk 13.16.20, CL 50A.409; trans. Arthur West Haddan, On the Trinity, The Works of Aurelius Augustine, No. 7 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1873), p. 333. Haddan's translation is used in preference to Stephen McKenna's, Saint Augustine: The Trinity, The Fathers of the Church, Vol. 45 (Washington: Catholic Univ. of America Press, 1963).

The Crucifixion neutralises the debilitating effect of sin on the mind of a man who has faith in Christ, enabling the man's innate love of righteousness to conceive true 'words' from his knowledge of righteousness; and these 'words' not only find their expression in the righteous thoughts and deeds of the faithful believer, but also make him righteous in himself. A man thus becomes righteous by loving Christ because a man thereby accepts the knowledge of Christ's righteousness as true and then strives to express it in speech and in action. In this way, we become more like Christ, 'filius dei [qui] venit et factus est filius hominis ut nos re-formaret ad imaginem dei,'⁴¹ a gradual process, beginning with the remission of sins and growing daily in the knowledge of righteousness. It is, then, only through faith in Christ that a man fulfils himself as a human being:

Necessaria est ergo fides ut beatitudinem consequamur omnibus humanae naturae bonis, id est et animi et corporis. Hanc autem fidem in Christo esse definitam qui in carne resurrexit a mortuis non moriturus ulterius, nec nisi per illum quemquam liberari a diaboli dominatu per remissionem peccatorum, in cuius diaboli partibus necesse est esse miseram vitam eandemque perpetuam, quae mors potius est dicenda quam vita, eadem fides habet. 42

⁴¹ 'the Son of God [who] came and was made the Son of man, that He might re-create us after the image of God.' Bk 4.4.7, CL 50.170; trans. Haddan, p. 116.

⁴² Therefore faith is necessary, that we may attain blessedness in all the good things of human nature, that is, of both soul and body. But that same faith requires that this faith be limited in Christ, who rose in the flesh from the dead, not to die any more; and that no one is freed from the dominion of the devil, through the forgiveness of sins, save by Him; and that in the abiding place of the devil, life must needs be at once miserable and never-ending, which ought rather to be called death than life.

Thus unbelievers, those who do not have faith in Christ, still lack the power to contemplate God's image within themselves, their human nature remains deformed, and they continue to live in Satan's power. Actually, after the Fall, God allowed man to pass into the power of Satan when He announced to Adam that he would return to the earth of which he was made, having already told the serpent 'Terram manducabis' (Bk 13.12.16, CL 50A.402; see Genesis 3.14-19).

The Mermedonians, in whom Satan works in Andreas, could not be more closely associated with the powers of evil than by their cannibalism. The Mermedonians diminish the sensible life of their captives by putting out their eyes and then they eliminate the spiritual life by altering the functions of the 'mind, the human reason, the heart in the breast' ('gewit, wera ingeþanc,/ heortan on hreðre,' 35a-36a), which is a fairly accurate description of the 'mind' (mens) as Augustine understands it: the rational soul which thinks, feels, desires, and wills (Burnaby, p. 34). The Mermedonians disfigure the image of God in their fellow-men by means of the potion that 'turns' the lower rationality away from the higher and so prevents their reciprocity. Like all sinful men, even the godless, the Mermedonians themselves have an innate knowledge of righteousness but they lack the power to contemplate it. Hence they 'know no better' (1088b) and their minds are 'in darkness' (141a). Yet the fear and sorrow caused by the flood and the fire lead them to question the righteousness of their actions: they have imprisoned Andrew mid unrihte (1559a). And when Andrew emerges whole from the prison and makes his way through the water, the Mermedonians become bliðe on mode (1583b), conscious of his righteousness and power, and aware of their own lowness and smallness in the sight of God. From this perspective, they finally realise the human greatness of Andrew.

In denying the humanity of their captives, the Mermedonians are like the Jews who deny the divinity of Christ and who are also spiritually blind, 'knowing no better' (745b). The Andreas-poet seems eager to establish the point that the Jews were given ample chance to recognise that Christ was God, but that their leaders were disabled by the jealous desire for temporal glory (domgeorne, 693a). This has some influence on the poem's theme of the gospel for, as Jerome says: 'In condemnationem Israelis Ionas [i.e., Dominus noster] ad gentes mittitur.'⁴³ The gospel, the message from God that only Christ's righteousness is sufficient to account for men's unrighteousness, can be either rejected or accepted, denied or believed. Even though Christ himself told the Jews and performed miracles in their presence in order to turn their minds to spiritual things,⁴⁴ they "'no ðær gelyfdon in hira Liffuman (562) . . . synnige ne mihton/ oncnawan þæt cynebearn"' (565b-66a), and so Christ commanded his apostles to proclaim the gospel to all the world instead. Moreover, if Krapp's suggestion (p. 105) is not merely interestingly apt but also correct, that brun oft oncwæð/ yð oðerre echoes Psalm 41.8: 'Abyssus abyssum invocat,' then here, too, there is a slight indication that we are meant to compare the Jews and the gentile Mermedonians. For this Biblical verse figures the Old and the New Testaments in the perfect harmony of corroboration.⁴⁵ What Andreas

⁴³ 'In Ionam Prophetam,' Commentarii in Prophetas Minores, Ch. 1.1-2, CL 76.380.

⁴⁴ 'ut . . . temporalibus insolitis intentos atque suspensos ad aeterna atque interiora converteret.' Augustine, op. cit., Bk 8.7.11, CL 50.286.

⁴⁵ 'Duabus enim abyssis duo testamenta significat, id est novum et vetus, quae se utraque mutua attestazione confirmant: quando vetus novum praedicat, novum autem commemorat testamenti veteris lectiones. Sic fit ut utraque se invocent, quando ad

is saying, in effect, is that sinful men are unable to appreciate the true nature of their fellow-men, to honour the image of God in other human beings, because they do not acknowledge Christ, who is the true image of the righteousness of God.

But there is more to it than that. The Jews do not see righteousness in a man because they do not see it within themselves; the Mermedonians do not see the humanity of strangers because they do not appreciate their own human nature. The minds of both the Jews and the Mermedonians are possessed by the 'words' of Satan, and both are deceived and misled by Satan because they believe his knowledge of the temporal to be an absolute truth. Satan infiltrates his consciousness into their minds by means of the senses, insinuating false knowledge until the lower rationality no longer seeks the approval of the higher, and merely condones every desire of the senses.⁴⁶ The Jewish rules and regulations, of course, deterred the Jewish elders from such sensual indulgence, but they neverthe-

alterutrum de sua confirmatione testantur.' Cassiodorus, Expositio Psalmorum, CL 97.384.

⁴⁶ This idea is a commonplace in mediaeval sermon literature. E.g., 'Estote Fortes in Bello,' Old English Homilies of the Twelfth Century, ed. R. Morris, EETS, OS 53 (London: Trübner, 1873), No. 30, p. 191 (eoh has been romanised and consonantal u replaced by v):

þenne he avint mannes heorte emti of rihte bi-
leve. and of soðere luve. he secheð forte þat
he open fint. and digeliche smuhgð þer inne.
at te egen gif it open ben to bi-holden idel.
oðer unnut. atte earen gif it open ben to listen
unnut oðer idel. at te nose gif it beoð open to
snuvende unluede breð. at te muð gif hit open
beoð to spekende mis. oðer on ete. oðer on drinke
to mis don. at te shape gif hie redie ben to
golliche deden. . . . Mid þusendfeld wrenches
he þe herte to-wendeð and al te secheð þat þonc
þe was er swo fieble. and wundeð þe hertes mid
hinderfulle wrenches. and mid te shene attre
þurh secheð al þe soule.

Cf. Piers Plowman, Pass. 1(B).38-42.

less believed to be true the falsehood that their temporal righteousness was sufficient holiness for an eternal God. A similar misapprehension of the spiritual ensnares the Mermedonians who, not knowing what place man has in the order of Creation, worship the spirits as benignant gods, supposing them to be immortal and powerful. Yet superbi illi maligni spiritus, as Augustine calls them,⁴⁷ are imposters exposed by the Incarnation, in which God Himself took a human form and even deigned to die in human flesh, thus exalting human nature far above the level of spirits. Again, the blasphemous speech of the Jewish elders is a manifestation not merely of their 'malicious intention' (inwitðanc, 670a), but more especially of their inability to perceive the truth, which cannot be expressed in words of hate. As Christ tells Andrew: "'Synnigene mihton/ þurh sarcwide soð gecyðan"' (964b-65b). Satan also succeeds in deluding the Mermedonians into believing that not he but Andrew is the folces gewinnan (1301a). Later, however, Andrew's radiant joy in the midst of physical suffering adds to the Mermedonians' knowledge of the world and of themselves and, although the 'famine' presents them with an experience beyond their immediate comprehension, it nevertheless reveals something of the hell that Satan has been concealing from them. Satan is continuously at work trying to conduce the whole of mankind to his own will by 'infecting' men's minds with his thoughts. And since we naturally tend to think of 'a good life' in terms of physical well-being, without thinking beyond this world, Satan can use this world to obstruct our spiritual vision, making us all modblinde to the gospel: 'deus huius saeculi excaecavit mentes infidelium, ut non fulgeat illis

⁴⁷ 'those proud malignant spirits.' Op. cit., Bk 13.17.22, CL 50A.412.

illuminatio Evangelii gloriae Christi, qui est imago Dei' (2 Corinthians 4.4).

Andreas constitutes a profound examination of evil. The cause of evil in the created universe was the arrogant disobedience of a beautiful archangel, mihtig on his modgebohte (Genesis, ASPR, I, 253a), who stopped 'imaging' God because he wanted to be as God is. Satan apostatised from God to himself, isolating himself from the rest of Creation and seeking to propagate and perpetuate his own image. The state of exile, then, is a primal condition which resulted from Satan's revolt against God, and so is the essential state of all sinful mankind who are estranged from God, having its consummation in the state of death. Since holy or righteous human beings are exiles, too, though only within the world itself, the most serious effect or manifestation of evil is the crucifixion and death of the holy and righteous Christ. But men can also be exiles from one another and from the rest of society, living self-enclosed lives founded on purely temporal values. Absorption in oneself and depreciation of one's fellow-men are symptomatic of the mind exiled from God and insulated from the truth by Satan's 'words.' The remedy for this personal evil is the gospel, which invites faith in Christ's righteousness and promises reconciliation, through which the mind is re-made in the image of God, and in which there is participation in God's own self-sacrifice. Self-sacrifice and demonstrable love for righteousness, manifested in speech and actions, are the signs of the new mind.

At the end of Andreas, Satan is in a deeper state of exile, the Mermedonians having been finally separated from him and reunited with God in spirit:

þæt wæs Satanes sar to gepolienne,
mycel modes sorg, þæt he ða menigeo geseah

hweorfan higeblīðe fram helltrafum
 burh Andreas este lare
 to fegeran gefean, þær næfre feondes ne bið,
 gastes gramhydiges, gang on lande.
 (1689a-94b)

This knowledge of rejection is a great source of mental pain to Satan, while the minds of the Mermedonians are once again joyful, renewed by the gospel, the message of God's grace, which enabled them to appreciate the true value of themselves as part of a mankind destined for eternal life in the bliss of God's presence, where evil spirits cannot go. Finally, although the poem's main emphasis lies on the carrying of the gospel to the gentile nations, it by no means withholds the gospel from the Jews. This is brought out most clearly in the opening lines of the poem, where Matthew is said to have enthusiastically put the gospel in writing specifically for the Jews:

wæs hira Matheus sum,
 se mid Iudeum ongan godspell ærest
 wordum writan wundorcraefte.
 (11b-13b)

It is in its relation to the gospel that the Augustinian theory of human nature can also augment and clarify our description of the experience of the two apostles in the poem. In the Mermedonian prison, Matthew's patience and praise demonstrate that worship is the only adequate expression of true knowledge of God. It is the ultimate human wisdom since animals do not have rational souls capable of being illuminated by the light of the knowledge of God.⁴⁸ The poem's attempt to describe Matthew's experience in terms of sight (visio) and speech (locutio), as the perception of God's beorhtan stefne, is an accurate description of contemplation, in

⁴⁸ Augustine, In Iohannis Evangelium Tractatus CXXIV, Trac. 1.18, CL 36.10.

which both are one and the same experience.⁴⁹ Matthew fixes his love on God Himself, his mind becomes filled with God's 'words,' and he is invigorated by this niwan stefne (123a). This latter phrase is thus much more than merely a 'rather unnecessary appendix to the description of the Lord inspiring his apostle with courage' (Schaar, p. 275). It depicts, in fact, the refreshed state of Matthew's mind, another phase in the renewal of his image of God. Because of this closeness to God, he is also aware of the Mermedonians' spiritual plight and, when he prays that he may not die blind among 'accursed workers of evil' (werigum wrohtsmiðum, 86a), he seems to be implying the alternative, that he would rather live to see the Mermedonians converted to the blessedness of righteousness.

At first, Andrew does not have the same concern for the Mermedonians as Matthew has. This is because Andrew does not place as much value on them as Matthew does, and indeed Andrew's knowledge of God has itself a temporal bias. Andrew's knowledge of the truth is conditioned by whether or not it suits his own interests in Achaia. So, although he correctly argues that angels intuit God's will, and can thus accomplish the mission more speedily than he can, Andrew fails to grasp the full implication of God's plan, which is to rescue not only Matthew and his fellow prisoners from the Mermedonians, but also the Mermedonians from Satan. Andrew's mind has lost its hold on his initial allegiance to Christ, whose express commission to all his disciples was to proclaim the gospel to eorlas elpeodige (199a), whether or not they be winas cuðe (198b). On the

⁴⁹ 'Foris enim cum per corpus haec fiunt aliud est locutio, aliud visio; intus autem cum cogitamus utrumque unum est.' Augustine, De Trinitate, Bk 15.10.18, CL 50A.485.

beach in Mermedonia, when Andrew is made painfully alive to his disobedience and pride, he feels that his active words should have been contemplative, that his own temporal interests hindered him from perceiving Christ's true nature. It is precisely at this point in the re-creation of his mind, when Andrew becomes aware of the source of his unrighteousness--'"worda . . . minra"' (923b-24a)--that he takes on a Christological significance in the poem.

As God conquered Satan by righteousness, 'ita et homines imitantes Christum iustitia quaerent diabolum vincere non potentia.'⁵⁰ A man can be powerful and sinful but never righteous and weak, for through a man's righteousness God demonstrates His power:

'cyð þe sylfne,
herd hige þinne, heortan staðola,
þæt hie min on ðe mægen oncnawan.'
(1212b-14b)

It is through his obedient suffering that Andrew's mind becomes protected by the righteousness of the temporal virtues necessary for a good life: justice, prudence, fortitude, and temperance (De Trinitate, Bk 14.9.12). Andrew's thought is now steeled against temptations: 'wes þæt æðele mod/ asundrad fram synnum' (1242b-43a). With courage and self-control he endures violent persecution as well as the temptation to defect and to surrender to Satan's will by calumniating God (1265b-69a).⁵¹ Andrew's transcendent righteousness,

⁵⁰ 'so also men, imitating Christ, should seek to conquer the devil by righteousness, not by might.' Ibid., Bk 13.13.17, CL 50A.404; trans. Haddan, p. 328.

⁵¹ Cf. 'Si enim consenseris tribulanti te in animam ipsius, quodammodo non devorabit carnem, sed voluntate perversa animam tuam manducabit.' 'For if thou shalt consent to him that troubleth thee, unto his soul, he will not, so to say, devour thy flesh, but by a perverted will he will eat up thy soul.' Augustine, Enarrationes in Psalmos, Ps. 26.12, Expos. 2.21, CL 38.166; trans. [J. E. Tweed], Expositions on the Book of Psalms, A Library of Fathers, No. 24, I (Oxford: Parker, 1847), 206-07.

his pulchritudo animi (De Trinitate, Bk 8.6.9, CL 50.281), is symbolised in the beautiful grove which springs into bloom out of his spilt blood. His temporal righteousness, or 'justice,' is evident in his desire to help the oppressed Mermedonians. In a psalm which has universal application, referring to the hardships of all men, to the Saviour of mankind, and to God as the protector of all His people alike, Andrew prays especially for the Mermedonians:

'ne læt nu bysmrian banan manncynnes,
 facnes frumbearn þurh feondes cræft
 leahtrum beleggan þa þin lof berað.'
 (1293a-95b)

Andrew's words have by now become a source of God's righteousness in the world and, as such, they constitute a threat to the working of Satan's will, lest they should find an 'echo' in the minds of the Mermedonians. Seen in this context, the flood (with its hleodor gryrelic, 1551b) and the fire (Egeslic æled eagsyne, 1550) form an image of God's Holy Spirit as His beorhtan stefne, convicting the Mermedonians of their sin in not believing in Andrew, of the righteousness of Andrew, and of the condemnation awaiting the followers of Satan.

Moral insulation does not at all mean that a man is inevitably cut off from God or from his fellow-men in this world. The Mermedonians eat each other mainly because they have been enclosed in this predatory existence by their sin. A man can live out his animality in solitude, but he can also become conscious of the true value of other human beings. His progress need not be blind, for he can couple human knowledge with human love, and thus discern and appreciate the image of God in his fellows. Actually, Andreas does not present an experience of hell, but of earthly life lived in the consequences of God's pursuant love.

These are some of the psychological and philosophical implica-

tions of the Mermedonians' sin, and they have further significant implications for the poem, especially in its use of the sea. The sea flows through the action of the poem in a number of ways for, unlike Christ's phantom ship, it is a permanent part of the world of the visibly real on which the poem is founded, though the sea itself is not limited to only one historical meaning. The poem's major themes can thus be expressed in terms of the poem's pervading marine idiom. For instance, the sea, as part of the natural world, also represents the individual human mind. The Incarnation took place partly in time, enriching the whole historical process with spiritual worth and illuminating its spiritual structure. It also gave a new meaning to human nature, the mind and the body, which are engaged when one rational human being expresses his faith in order to stir the spirit of another rational human being. Although his mind possessed the power to contemplate its knowledge of righteousness, Christ could yet appreciate the physical and temporal demands and deficiencies of the human mind generally. He humbly assumed the body's frailty and mortality, but by his divinity he also raised the human soul to perfection: 'Adiungens ergo nobis similitudinem humanitatis suae abstulit dissimilitudinem iniquitatis nostrae, et factus particeps mortalitatis nostrae fecit [nos] particeps divinitatis suae.'⁵² In his dealings with individual men and women, Christ knows that the cause of spiritual disturbance is the 'wind' of vicious temporal desire which irresistibly draws the disruptive 'words' out of the mind's deep memory of former

⁵² 'By joining therefore to us the likeness of His humanity, He took away the unlikeness of our unrighteousness; and by being made partaker of our mortality, He made us partakers of His divinity.' Augustine, *De Trinitate*, Bk 4.2.4, *CL* 50.164; trans. Haddan, p. 111.

'tempests' and 'shipwrecks.' In the 'darkness' of faithlessness the mind loses sight of its *primaeval* origin as well as of the Spirit's blessing upon it. By directly addressing the troubled mind, Christ forces the mind to turn towards him, who is light, and leave behind that *vitam tenebrosae abyssio similem*.⁵³ His words 'rebuke' the mind's 'waves' of thoughts and penetrate the 'abyss' of unrighteous values and attitudes, instilling a knowledge of peace from which will issue calm 'words' that do not find their expression in verbal 'swells' which threaten to 'sink' one's own life and the lives of one's fellow-men. Without the spiritual light which faith in Christ affords, the human mind is a dark and unknown mass of instincts, motives, and ideas, of which some are noble, some human, but most are treacherous because their manifestations are unpredictable, and precarious because the unenlightened mind is ever undergoing a kaleidoscopic experience of ephemeral pleasures and pains. The mind that does not speak to God deceives itself and conspires with itself to deceive other minds.

Andreas is a poem concerned with marvels, yet the crucial issues in it have to do with the 'real' lives of men, women, and children. Complex emotional pressures and thought processes of human beings carry the flux of the poem's meaning. The significance of sub-conscious feelings and latent 'words' consequently finds expression in the metaphoric character of the sea and through the actual recurrent presence of the sea in the poem. The presence of the sea insists that there is more to life than one's own consciousness.

⁵³ 'existence which resembles the dark depths of the sea.' Augustine, Confessiones, Bk 13.2.3, ed. Martin Skutella, Bibliotheca Scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana, rev. ed. Heiko Jürgens and Wiebke Schaub (1934; Stuttgart: B. G. Teubner, 1969), p. 330, ll. 17-18; trans. R. S. Pine-Coffin, Saint Augustine: Confessions (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1961), p. 312.

There is a strong consciousness in the poem of the two shores of Mermedonia and Achaia, separated by vast and stormy waters, which Andrew crosses to reach Matthew and which he must cross again when he finally leaves the Mermedonians. The expanse of sea that Andrew has to traverse is related to the development of his saintliness:

'No ðu swa swiðe synne gefremedest
 swa ðu in Achaia ondsæc dydest,
 ðæt ðu on feorwegas feran ne cuðe
 . . . wast nu þe gearwor,
 þæt ic eaðe mæg anra gehwylcne
 fremman ond fyrþran freonda minra
 on landa gehwylc, þær me leofost bið.'
 (926a-28b, 932b-35b)

The sea represents the natural forces of resistance in the world which all men experience to a greater or lesser degree, depending on their consciousness of their spiritual involvement in the lives of other human beings. The righteous person tries to live righteously and desires all men to do likewise. This, however, implies not merely a temporary adjustment and tolerant accommodation but continual self-sacrifice which can never be fulfilling if it is not total. Mermedonia is an island surrounded by a violent sea and this comes to represent not only the inhabitants' hostility towards the outside world but their fear of each other. Their society has a precarious basis, constantly threatened by the destructive instincts and self-interest of each citizen, and dominated by a communal lower rationality which is subject only to its own pride.

In a slightly different sense, the sea also represents life itself in its sinfulness. Human life is stricken with an inherent bitterness: it begins with pain, continues in suffering, and ends in woe. This state of affairs is the result of sin, for the physical world is Satan's domain and his will is apparently supreme in it (1372a-74b). Similarly, the sea's 'words' express the 'dark will' of the deeps, where Satan has his abode as a sea monster. Yet the

physical world has reference to the spiritual realm from where God's will transcends the whole created universe. Christ's vanquishing the malignant sea is therefore an antitype of his harrowing of hell. As Lee says: 'That the chaotic waters symbolize, in the traditional way, the hell that threatens unwary seafarers and that the ship, moving forward "most like a bird" (497) is the human soul, secure and fearless against hell's onslaughts because Christ is its pilot (Christo gubernante), can hardly be doubted' (The Guest-Hall of Eden, p. 93). But there is more to the matter than that. When he calms the stormy sea, Christ also subdues the human fear of physical death and directs it towards God, thereby demonstrating that the sea, like the human mind, is actually fathomed with a latent peace at the core of its being. And this comparison can be extended to include all mankind being blessed, when the sea becomes still, in awe before Christ. In fact, Christ's mastery of the waves is a metaphoric re-forming of the minds of men according to the image of their first creation. At the same time, he penetrates the spiritual opacity of men's minds.

Finally, the sea also has a special meaning for the Christian. When his faith 'falls asleep,' the Christian's mind becomes like a boat encountering squalls and being tossed about, on the point of being swamped by temptation. The sea, looking lively, seems to signify the joyous prosperity of the sinner. Yet the sea's fluctuations aptly dramatise the transitory and bitter nature of the sinner's success in the world. When Christ arises at the call of the Christian who has lost his inward tranquillity, the mind's faith returns, helps him to realise that he has a goal in eternity, and sees him through the danger.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ Augustine, Enarrationes in Psalmos, Ps. 25, Expos. 2.4, CL 38.143-44.

In the Anglo-Saxon version of Augustine's Soliloquia, a conversation between Augustine and his higher rationality, King Alfred elaborates this same point with the aid of some interesting figurative improvisations of his own. Like an anchor-cable, one's knowledge of righteousness, or the rational soul's contemplative vision of God, fastens the ship of the mind to the eternal security of God:

þeah þæt scyp si ute on ðære sæ on þam ydum, hyt
byð gesund (and) untoslegen, gyf se streng aþolað;
forðam hys byð se oðer ende fast on þære eorðan
and se oðer on ðam scype. 55

The three indispensable virtues, and the only temporal means of seeing God, are faith, hope, and love:

ðæt sint þa þreo anceras þe þæt scyp ðes modes
healdað on gemang ðam brogan þara yða. þæt mod
þeah hæfð micle frofre on ðam þe hit gelyfð and
geare wot þæt þa ungelimp and þa ungesælpa þisse
wurldes ne beoð æce. swa swa scypes hlaford,
þonne þæt scyp ungetæsllicost on ancre rit and
seo sæ hreohost byð, þonne wot he gewiss smelte
wedere toweard. 56

This is not to say, of course, that the Christian escapes the material world, only that his mind cannot disrupt or disturb his behaviour, since his lower rationality is 'anchored' to righteousness by means of his higher rationality. The Christian does not need to 'close his eyes' to the sensible world so long as he has virtuous 'words' to act as 'anchors.' For instance, Andrew has to learn that the Christian sees through the eyes of Christ, that his faith sustains his inward vision, and that his knowledge of righteousness is his safeguard against the weakness of his flesh. Once Andrew has learned

⁵⁵ King Alfred's Version of St. Augustine's 'Soliloquies,'
ed. Thomas A. Carnicelli (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press,
1969), Bk 1.20b, p. 62, ll. 1-3.

⁵⁶ Ibid., Bk 1.25b, p. 68, ll. 3-8, Cook's suggestion unobtrusively incorporated.

obedience, sympathy, and humility when he crosses the sea by means of Christ's 'Wood,' he is ready to demonstrate God's righteousness to the Mermedonians.

(v)

It is Andrew's righteousness that finally draws out our love for him as a man, especially its dramatic vindication in the flood episode. It is also his readily identifiable humanity that endears him to us when he 'ongann hæleð blissigean,/ wigendra þreat wordum retan' (1607a-08b). The humanity of Christ lies partly in his attitude to the world. He lives in it, fills it with his 'grace' (þrym, 344b) and, because it is not his business to judge the world, he sees it sympathetically. At all times he thus fulfils his humanity, whether in speaking to the world through miracles or in preaching the gospel. Andrew's humanity is similar at the end of the poem. His preaching is a fulfilment of his own humanity, and at the same time it 'blesses' his fellow-men in their dying condition (223b-24b) by passing on to them the grace of Christ (548b). It is only by not condemning the world, by not keeping himself aloof from it, that the saint is able to remain fully human. Andrew's desire for a selfish contemplative existence in the world merely ensures that he does not gain heaven, from where his spiritual impulse originated. For heaven is to be attained, not in an isolated withdrawal from people, but in an occupation of social concern which gives the hope of life to others.

Yet, if a saint also appears at times slightly less than truly human or as merely a depersonalised representation of various aspects of a Christian's life, his real significance and value lie in the manner whereby his own life alters the lives of those who encounter

it, men and women whose temporal lives are to be, at best, mimetic of Christ, the perfect human being.⁵⁷ And because the saint's life is continuous with Christ's,

nescio quomodo amplius et in ipsius formae caritatem excitamur per fidem qua credimus vixisse sic aliquem, et spem qua nos quoque ita posse vivere qui homines sumus ex eo quod aliqui homines ita vixerunt minime desperamus ut hoc et desideremus ardentius et fidentius precemur. Ita et ipsorum vitam facit a nobis diligere formae illius dilectio secundum quam vixisse creduntur, et illorum vita credita in eandem formam flagrantiore excitat caritatem 58

As fellow-man, as disciple, as apostle, and finally as saint, Andrew is an image of Christ who is the 'pattern' (forma), the 'Word' of God. In terms of the idiom of the Andreas-poem, then, a saint may be called a rhetorical metaphor for Christ, inasmuch as he clarifies and enlarges our knowledge of Christ in a precisely concrete and immediate way. For instance, there is the obvious parallel with the Resurrection: after three brutal days and nights in prison Andrew emerges whole. However, the main Christological typology in the poem centres on the Crucifixion.

⁵⁷ Raymon S. Farrar, 'Structure and Function in Representative Old English Saints' Lives,' Neophil, 57, No. 1 (1973), 88.

⁵⁸ we are somehow stirred more largely to love of the pattern itself, through the faith by which we believe that a man has lived in accord with it, and by the hope which forbids us, since there have been men who so lived, to despair of ourselves who are men like them being able to live like them; so that we desire it more ardently and pray for it more confidently. What makes us love their life is the love of that pattern according to which we believe they lived; and their life, when we believe it, stirs in us towards the same pattern a more burning charity.

Augustine, De Trinitate, Bk 8.9.13, CL 50.290; trans. Burnaby, p. 54.

For the saint to be a true image of Christ is obviously impossible, but his life must match Christ's as closely as possible, fulfilling his own personality as an individual human being at the same time. So, in the Andreas-poem, the similarities between Andrew's life and Christ's are both explicit and implicit. For instance, within the context of the poem itself, there is a similarity between Andrew's stilling of the retributive flood (1585b-87a) and Christ's rebuking of the murmuring waves (450b-54a), and as Christ overcomes the sin in the world so Andrew conquers the evil in Mermedonia.

And yet there is more. The saint can overcome his own sinful human nature and can perfect his mind only as he becomes increasingly Christ-like. In the Andreas-poem, we see the eponymous saint first commit a sin (in Achaia), then repent (on the Mermedonian beach), and then do what might be called penance (in the Mermedonian prison). Actually, Andrew undergoes a type of crucifixion. Andrew himself makes the connection when he compares Christ's suffering on the Cross for only one day with his own three-day passion (1406b-15a). Earlier, Christ, in the form of a child, forecasts that the most difficult part of Andrew's mission to Mermedonia will be the conversion of the inhabitants and that only Andrew's suffering will accomplish this. Christ points to his own earthly suffering as Andrew's model:

'Ic adreah feala
yrmþa ofer eorðan; wolde ic eow on ðon
burh bliðne hige bysne onstellan,
swa on ellþeode ywed wyrðeð.'
(969b-72b)

Unlike Christ, of course, Andrew does not die and is not buried, but there are certain similarities in the manner of their suffering which have an important bearing on the poem's meaning. For instance, we learn from Scripture that when one of the soldiers Christ's 'swat ut forlet,/ dreor to foldan' (968b-69a), 'sona of-eode blod 7

water,⁵⁹ and Christ tells Andrew: "scel þin hra dæled/ wundum weorðan, wættre geliccost/ faran flode blod" (952b-54a). Yet there is a significant disparity in this similitude. Andrew's suffering will cause many Mermedonians to turn to Christ and Andrew's blood will wash over the evil land of Mermedonia, but only Christ's own blood can actually cleanse the land, as it is the only true baptismal agent.⁶⁰ Again, Matthew's despondent picture of himself in prison suffering like a dumb animal adds to the meaning of Andrew's 'crucifixion' by suggesting that Andrew, probably in the same prison, suffers like a lamb, symbol of obedience, capturing most clearly Andrew's change of heart in his acceptance of God's will.

These images of water and of a meek animal also allude to the Old Testament prophecies of the Messiah's suffering ('quasi agnus coram tondente se obmutescet, et non aperiet os suum,' Isaiah 53.7), as do the last words of the crucified Christ, which Andrew takes upon his own lips partly to express his own desperate desolation:

"Ic ðe, Fæder engla, frignan wille,
lifes Leoftfruma; hwæt forlætest ðu me?"
(1412a-13b)

The words of Psalm 21 are echoed here, 'hwi me þu forlete' (The Vitellius Psalter, ed. Rosier, p. 44), and the whole psalm is taken in ecclesiastical tradition to be descriptive of Christ's passion. Augustine asks why these words were used:

nisi quia nos ibi eramus, nisi quia corpus Christi ecclesia? Utquid dixit: Deus meus, Deus meus, respice me; quare me dereliquisti, nisi quodammodo intentos nos faciens et dicens: psalmus iste

⁵⁹ The Gospel according to Saint John, Ch. 19.34, ed. Skeat, p. 171, Rushworth gloss.

⁶⁰ Cf. Augustine, In Iohannis Evangelium Tractatus CXXIV, Trac. 120.2, CL 36.661.

de me scriptus est? 61

Nevertheless, Christ's humanity is also strongly emphasised in these verses,⁶² and one gets the impression that while the Andreas-poem does indeed draw similarities between Andrew's suffering and the Crucifixion, it does so mainly to point up the essential disparities between them. It is important that the audience be able to sympathise with the saint as a fallible human being; indeed, the achievement of the poem's mode depends on it. Interestingly, the same psalm also contains, in v. 15, a water image that suggests the one in the Andreas-poem: 'swaswa wæter utagoten wæron ð ic eom' (Rosier, p. 46). In the light of Augustine's exegesis of this metaphor, 'Effusus est Christus sicut aqua, abluti sunt sordentes, rigatae sunt mentes',⁶³ the flood that the Mermedonians find terrifying turns out to be the blood of Christ cleansing and renewing their minds. Andrew's suffering is a symbolic rehearsal of Christ's passion for the express purpose of creating an opportunity for God to display the power with which He raised Christ from the dead. Moreover, v. 15 continues: '7 tostredde wæron ð synd ealle ban mine,' and these 'bones' are traditionally understood to indicate Christ's firm and faithful

61 but because we were there, but because the Church is the Body of Christ? Wherefore said He, My God, My God, look upon Me: why hast Thou forsaken Me? unless in some sort as rousing our attention, and saying, "Was this Psalm written concerning Me?"

Enarrationes in Psalmos, Ps. 21.2, Expos. 2.3, CL 38.123; trans. Tweed, p. 152.

62 E.g., Cassiodorus, Expositio Psalmorum: 'Haec tamen verba accipienda sunt ab humanitatis ipsius natura' (CL 97.189).

63 'Christ was poured out like water, the filthy were cleansed, minds were watered.' Op. cit., Expos. 2.15, CL 38.126; trans. Tweed, p. 156.

disciples whom he sent out 'velut agnos in medio luporum' (Augustine, loc. cit.). The psalm also contains a metaphor of a worm, 'ic soðlice eom wylm 7 na(læs) man' (v. 7), alluding to Christ's unique and humble mortality (Expos. 2.7), as well as one of wax, 'geworden is heorte min swaswa weax' (v. 15), which describes how, with Christ's crucifixion, Scripture was for the first time made clear and comprehensible to all men (Expos. 1.15).

Significantly, the psalm is also concerned with the salvation of the Gentiles. In his second discourse on this psalm Augustine is at some pains to stress the universal effect of the Redemption. The island of Mermedonia might certainly be said to be situated 'at the end of the earth' (v. 28), isolated far from God and the rest of mankind, but by exploiting all these associations of Psalm 21, the Andreas-poem implies that there is one Creator of all the races of the world, that Christ died for all men, and that, for all their sin, the Mermedonians are not excluded from God's mercy and grace.

Also, as already noticed, the opening verse of the psalm is usually interpreted figuratively as the crucified Christ's proclamation of his own resurrection (Augustine, Expos. 1.1; Cassiodorus, *ibid.*). Andrew, too, undergoes a type of resurrection:

Aras þa mægene rof; sægde Meotude þanc,
 hal of hæfte heardra wita.
 Næs him gewemmed wite, ne wloh of hrægle
 lungre alysed, ne loc of heafde,
 ne ban gebrocen, ne blodig wund
 lice gelenge, ne laðes dæl
 þurh dolgslege dreore bestemed,
 ac wæs eft swa ær þurh þa æðelan miht
 lof lædende, ond on his lice trum.
 (1469a-77b)

The double echo of the Old and New Testaments clarifies Andrew's obedient and hopeful attitude to his suffering, fully implicates his mission to Mermedonia in the salvation of mankind, and draws our attention to Andrew's sinful humanity in contrast with Christ's

sinless human nature. Christ's crucifixion and resurrection demonstrate that our sinful human nature, because crucified in him, can be re-created conforming to his humanity and all who submit themselves to such a 'crucifixion' approach his human image. The martyrological saint, then, is someone who undergoes a spiritual as well as physical type of crucifixion, while most of us suffer only inwardly. Christ's crucifixion may thus be seen as having a double significance: the soul's death and the body's death. Augustine puts it this way:

Interioris enim hominis nostri sacramento data est illa vox pertinens ad mortem animae nostrae significandam non solum in psalmo verum etiam in cruce: Deus meus, deus meus, ut quid me dereliquisti? . . . Crucifixio quippe interioris hominis poenitentiae dolores intelleguntur et continentiae quidam salubris cruciatus, per quam mortem mors impletatis perimitur in qua nos non relinquit deus. 64

Similarly, Christ's resurrection signifies our own inner resurrection in which our minds are fixed on the risen Christ. On the other hand, Christ's crucifixion typifies the physical suffering we should be prepared to endure as part of his Body, i.e., the Church (Colossians 1.24), while his bodily resurrection contains a type of the eventual resurrection of our 'outward man.' Andrew undergoes the double ordeal, re-enacts, however imperfectly, Christ's crucifixion and resurrection, and simultaneously participates in both like any other

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For it was in a mystery as regards our inner man, so as to signify the death of our soul, that those words were uttered, not only in the Psalm, but also on the cross: "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me? . . . by the crucifixion of the inner man are understood the pains of repentance, and a certain wholesome agony of self-control, by which death the death of ungodliness is destroyed, and in which death God has [not] left us.

human being.

The usual way for the ordinary person to participate in the death and resurrection of Christ is by means of the Church's sacrament of the Eucharist. Traces of this sacrament appear here and there in Andreas, though not prominently enough for it to determine the main direction of the poem's meaning to the extent that the sacrament of Baptism influenced the interpretation of the Exodus-poem in the previous chapter.⁶⁵ Nevertheless, if the Church is the Body of Christ then it must continue his life on earth, and so the sacred rites themselves portray events in his life, and the audience would probably be familiar with the relevant patristic commentaries. According to Danielou, two themes characterise the Eucharist: the sacrifice of the Cross and the correlative liturgy in heaven.⁶⁶ Through the sacrament, the congregation not only re-enact the Crucifixion but also share in the 'heavenly blessings' of the Resurrection. Christ's priestly action in heaven is brought out in our poem:

Da reordade rice Peoden,
 ece Elmihtig; heht his engel gan,
 mærne maguþegn, ond mete syllan,
 frefran feascæfte ofer flodes wylm,
 þæt hie þe eað mihton ofer yða geþring
 drohtaþ adreogan. (364a-69a)

Twenty lines later, Andrew, after giving thanks for this food, blesses the sea captain by calling on God to give him heofonlicne hlaf, and

⁶⁵ Lee (p. 89) and Casteen (p. 78, n. 1) certify a eucharistic typology, while Hill puts forward a strong case for a figural allusion to various aspects of the sacrament of Baptism in the concluding scenes of Andreas. Actually, it is possible that the poet intended to juxtapose both sacraments at this point by an imaginative process of chronological splicing, 'in the same way that the distortions of visual realism in Anglo-Saxon art convey iconographic significance' (Hill, p. 268).

⁶⁶ Jean Danielou, The Bible and the Liturgy, Liturgical Studies, Vol. 3 (Notre Dame, Ind.: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1956), p. 128.

the hidden allusion to Christ as the Bread of heaven effects a sharp dramatic irony. Again, when Andrew is recounting to the sea captain some of Christ's miracles, he includes the consecration and conversion of water into wine, saying that Christ made it turn 'beornum to blisse, on þa beteran gecynd' (588). In his lecture on this miracle, Augustine says that the bonum vinum is the gospel.⁶⁷ Finally, largely because of its effect on the Mermedonians, the flood in the closing scenes of the poem takes on the subsidiary associations of the eucharistic cup which

inebriat ut sobrios faciat, ut mentes ad spiritalem
sapientiam redigat, ut a sapore isto saeculari ad
intellectum Dei unusquisque resipiscat 68

Andrew serves a priestly function though the Mermedonians have not been baptised yet, and so cannot be participating in a real sacrament. They are drinking beer not wine, and there is no bread in Mermedonia. All the same, there is an unmistakable hint of the Eucharist in the banquet scene which contributes in no small way to the dominant ironic tone of the passage. Above all, it brings out the differences between Christ and Andrew. If Christ is the perfect human image of the invisible Deity, then Andrew is an image of Christ, though Andrew is as imperfectly like Christ as Christ is profoundly like God.

It would be a mistake, however, to believe this figurative characterisation of Andrew to be axiomatic and inflexible. As Philip Rollinson points out, the lesson of a saint's legend is quite literally

⁶⁷ In Iohannis Evangelium Tractatus CXXIV, Trac. 9.2, CL 36.91.

⁶⁸ 'inebriates in such a way that it leaves us our reason; it leads souls to spiritual wisdom; by it each comes from a taste for profane things to the understanding of the things of God.' Cyprian, Epistolae, No. 63.11, PL 4.382B-C; trans. Danielou, p. 184.

epideictic:

St. Paul's obedience and faithful witness to Christ oblige the believer to obey Christ and witness to his faith. Although the particular conditions of time, place, and so on will certainly vary, the kind of thing encouraged is the same. The Christian may not be able to convert Corinthian merchants, like St. Paul, but he can witness to his neighbors or acquaintances wherever he is. 69

Rollinson then goes on to rule out altogether the possibility of a saint's legend's having any hidden or figurative (i.e., sacramental) meaning, in so far as the exemplary lesson depends directly on its literal context (p. 16). However, this argument circumscribes the saint's legend as a poetic mode, for the poetic martyrology is in effect another way in which the ordinary person, Christian and unbeliever alike, can participate in the passion and resurrection of Christ.

But a saint's life is not merely epideictic; it is also deliberative. And in so far as a saint is a rhetorical metaphor for Christ, all mankind is inevitably involved as the immediate relevant context. This figurative relationship is thus historical in a special way, connecting the saint's life horizontally with Christ's life in the world (i.e., typologically) as well as vertically with the life of the other Christians in heaven (i.e., sacramentally).⁷⁰ In other words, the poetic saint's life presents Christ's life so as to move the audience, who will be especially alive to the similarities between the saint's life and the life of Christ. As Farrar points out: 'The saint always functions with Christ as archetype; and his

⁶⁹ 'Some Kinds of Meaning in Old English Poetry,' Annuaire Mediaevale, 11 (1970), 15.

⁷⁰ Bloomfield, 'Episodic Motivation and Marvels in Epic and Romance,' p. 120.

miracles . . . are "modelled on scriptural events."⁷¹ On this level of historical fact, Andrew may be rightly called a 'romantic' hero, in Frye's ethical sense of the term:

If superior in degree to other men and to his environment, the hero is the typical hero of romance, whose actions are marvellous but who is himself identified as a human being. The hero of romance moves in a world in which the ordinary laws of nature are slightly suspended: prodigies of courage and endurance, unnatural to us, are natural to him 72

Of course, Frye's is a generalised characterisation and it does not entirely fit Andrew. It could hardly be said, for instance, that Andrew's endurance is natural to him. Nevertheless, if we superimpose this classification on the following one of the 'low mimetic' hero, taking something from each, we can get a more precise idea of Andrew's sainthood:

If superior neither to other men nor to his environment, the hero is one of us: we respond to a sense of his common humanity, and demand from the poet the same canons of probability that we find in our own experience. (Ibid., p. 34)

The combination of these two heroic aspects makes for the irresistible appeal of Andreas, which leaves one with the strong impression of a human being's romantic potentialities as the image of God. Haglographic convention allowed the poet to rework or to elaborate the historical basis of his story, inventing and improvising the facts according to his didactic purposes. Yet despite the fact that all haglography is made up of the fanciful and the factual, the romantic and the realistic, it was probably considered an authoritative source

⁷¹ Op. cit., p. 86, quoting Gordon H. Gerould, Saints' Legends (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1916), p. 24.

⁷² Northrop Frye, Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays (1957; Princeton, N. J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1971), p. 33.

of true history.⁷³ The poet would use the Bible extensively, counting on his audience's familiarity with the four Vulgate Gospels to supply the background data of Christ's life on earth. Expanding these were the less direct Old Testament references to Christ as the Messiah, which the patristic commentaries traced and explicated, relating them in various ways to the New Testament account of Christ's life and to its larger significance. In addition, there is the exemplary life of Christ the perfect man which, seen most often in the life of the saint, is evident from time to time in the life of every Christian striving to imitate Christ in his duty to God and in his dealings with his fellow-men.

The chief didactic value of the romantic component in the saint's legend is that it helps the audience to see beyond their temporal existence by compelling them to refer to a supernatural motivation and control of events, if they are to make any coherent sense of the narrative. Since the gospel itself speaks of a sublimer sphere of existence and experience, a poetic saint's legend contributes to the audience's knowledge of the heavenly realm by rehearsing the gospel in terms at once more immediate and intelligible to their lower rationalities. No single saint can exactly imitate Christ, and this is why a saint's life is such popular material among mediaeval poets, giving them new opportunities to explore the life of Christ for as many facets as may come to light in the life of the saint being celebrated. Gregory makes a similar, pertinent point in his mystical reading of the Pleiades which takes us back to the opening lines of Andreas:

Simul quidem sitae sunt, et tamen lucis suae
viritim radios fundunt. Ita omnes sancti aliis
atque aliis ad praedicandum temporibus apparentes,

⁷³ Bloomfield, 'Understanding Old English Poetry,' in Essays and Explorations, pp. 65-66.

et disjuncti sunt per visionem suae imaginis, et
 conjuncti per intentionem mentis. Simul micant,
 quia unum praedicant 74

For the audience, a poetic saint's life offers not only a fresh perspective of the life of Christ but also a clarification of the gospel itself, 'a particular realization of the true story' (ibid., p. 65), because it is enacted in real life by a recognisably human being. The specific psalterian associations and typological qualities of some of the rhetorical metaphors in Andreas bind and knit together the whole poem, which works through the due activity of each metaphor, and achieves itself in the theme of the gospel. Andreas is another version of Christ's life, and the various manifestations of Christ's life in the poem may be construed as constituting the image aura of the entire poem read as a rhetorical metaphor for the gospel. The poem emphasises three aspects of the gospel in particular, interpreting them for the audience in an original way: its cost to God, its universality, and its effect on human nature corrupted by evil.

This rhetorical relation of Andreas to its audience is a dynamic one in the sense that the poem has to present its treatment of evil to an audience whose human nature has been deformed by sin. To do this, the poem makes the audience see themselves in relation to the sea: first, to acknowledge Christ's righteousness; next, to believe in his divine power; and then, to reach out to one's fellow-men.

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They are situated indeed together, and yet pour forth separately the rays of their light. In like manner all the Saints appearing at different times for the purpose of preaching, are both disunited in our sight of their person, and united in their intention of mind. They shine together, because they preach One

Moralium Libri, Bk 29.31.68, PL 76.515C; trans. [James Bliss], Morals on the Book of Job, A Library of Fathers, No. 23, III (Oxford: Parker, 1847), 350-51.

The audience is thus encouraged to keep faith, to replace the howling tempests of blasphemy with the heavenly music of psalms, to speak with authority above and against the violent and malevolent voices of the world, and to proclaim the gospel in an attempt to re-form the minds of men in every part of the world.

Andreas is a poem concerned to analyse the spiritual disablement of mankind. It diagnoses mankind's main defect and demonstrates that the poetic saint's legend can help to remedy it, by making us feel the equivocal relationship between reality and romance, not simply as a technical problem to be solved by the poet, but as a physical and spiritual problem rooted in human civilisation. An adequate critical appreciation of Andreas, then, must take into account its full rhetorical nature. As epideictic rhetoric, it praises Andrew and his acquired mastery of the sea, while it denounces various forms of 'worldliness'; as deliberative rhetoric, it persuades the audience to shun 'worldliness' and to become virtuous like and through the saint. The poem is the realisation of the effective power of the gospel to renew men's minds; it is a new enactment of the gospel that sacramentally re-forms the minds of the audience by transcending their inherent preoccupation with the material and temporal world. As Christ miraculously re-forms the 'mind' of the sea, and as Andrew symbolically re-forms the minds of the Mermedonians, so the Andreas-poem itself re-forms the minds of the audience. The whole force of the poem lies in the harmony of its rhetoric, a harmony most subtly figured in the metaphoric presentation of the sea.

Chapter 6

THE HEROIC SEA

THE FIGURATIVE PATTERN OF THE THEME OF PROTECTION IN BEOWULF

Caeterum libri catholici tutius leguntur et cautius;
et gentiles simplicioribus periculosius patent: sed
in utrisque exerceri fidelioribus ingeniis utilissimum
est. Nam exquisita lectio singulorum, doctissimum;
cauta electio meliorum, optimum facit.

John of Salisbury, Polycraticus¹

Perhaps the harshest adverse criticism Klaeber makes of Beowulf as a work of literature is that it lacks an overall structural unity.

'The poem Beowulf,' he says, 'consists of two distinct parts joined in a very loose manner and held together only by the person of the hero.'² Klaeber's criticism is irresponsible, however, since he himself divides the poem into two parts, only to find the division a structural weakness. This in turn leads him to say that the first part 'does not in the least require or presuppose a continuation' and that the second is not 'dependent for its interpretation on the

¹ 'The safe and cautious thing to do is to read only Catholic books. It is somewhat dangerous to expose the unsophisticated to pagan literature; but a training in both is very useful to those safe in the faith, for accurate reading on a wide range of subjects makes the scholar; careful selection of the better makes the saint.' Bk 7.10, PL 199.659D-60A; trans. Joseph B. Pike, Frivolities of Courtiers and Footprints of Philosophers (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1938), p. 253, rpt. in 'Medieval Literary Theory,' in The Literature of Medieval England, ed. D. W. Robertson, Jr (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1970), p. 265.

² Fr[ederick] Klaeber, ed., Beowulf and The Fight at Finnsburg, 3rd ed. (Boston: Heath, 1950), p. 11.

events of the first plot.'³ It is an aim of the present chapter to show that 'Part II' is the periodic complement of 'Part I.'

Actually, the idea was long anticipated by E. V. Gordon, whose thematic thesis differs from mine in other respects, in a much neglected footnote:

[The] second part is not merely an additional adventure; it gives the meaning of the whole poem. There can be no doubt of the essential unity of Beowulf: the whole poem is carefully planned to show the tragedy and importance of its elegiac theme. 4

Critical interpretations of Beowulf, however, in whole and in part, are as diverse as they are indefatigable. To be sure, the poem presents some unique problems of text, semantics, historicity, and genre.⁵ But the main critical problem revolves about the poem's total intrinsic meaning, still controversial. The two most important recent contributions to the discussion are, on the one

³ Loc. cit. Also assuming a bipartite design, T. M. Gang finds that 'the events of the first part of the poem do not influence those in the second; there is no cumulative effect. The poem may be a balance; it is certainly not a unity' ('Approaches to Beowulf,' RES, NS 3, No. 9, 1952, 9).

⁴ E. V. Gordon, ed., The Battle of Maldon, Methuen's Old English Library (London: Methuen, 1937), p. 24. H. L. Rogers, in his 'Beowulf's Three Great Fights,' RES, 6, No. 24 (1955), comes closest to my view of the unifying progression of a moral theme. Rogers believes this theme is 'that a man should not trust in the things of this world, for they will fail him' (p. 342). But this is procrustean, too simplistic and meagre a pattern to impose on a poem like Beowulf. More recently, after successfully defending the poem from Magoun's dissective zeal (see above, Ch. 1, p. 27), Brodeur reaffirms its unity: 'The less we try to chop the poem into separate songs, the more we look at it as a whole, the more coherence and excellence it assumes' ('Beowulf: One Poem or Three?' in Medieval Literature and Folklore Studies: Essays in Honor of Francis Lee Utley, ed. Jerome Mandel and Bruce A. Rosenberg, New Brunswick, N. J.: Rutgers Univ. Press, 1970, p. 23).

⁵ A profitable approach to the last two issues can be made via Stanley B. Greenfield's article 'Geatish History: Poetic Art and Epic Quality in Beowulf,' Neophil, 47, No. 3 (1963), 211-17.

hand, that the poem is an 'historical epic with both moral and allegorical significance' and, on the other hand, that it is a romance-tragedy, with lyric overtones, in which 'the dominant vision . . . is of the defeat of man in the kingdoms of this world by the powers of darkness.'⁶ Ultimately, however, both these interpretations align themselves with Tolkien's gubernatorial essay which sees, informed by the common elegiac lif is læne theme, the transcendent universality of the conflict between mankind and the monsters as the central meaning of the poem.⁷ Of course, this recent alignment does not imply that there has been no worthwhile critical progress since 1936--far from it--but simply that there remains the ample probability of there being more progress along the lines indicated by Tolkien. For, truly, while Tolkien's essay offered the most comprehensive formula in his time for finding a satisfactory reading of the poem, his confident assumptions still hold good today:

The high tone, the sense of dignity, alone is evidence in Beowulf of the presence of a mind lofty and thoughtful. It is, one would have said, improbable that such a man would write more than three thousand lines (wrought to high finish) on matter that is really not worth serious attention; that remains thin and cheap when he has finished with it. Or that he should in the selection of his material, in the choice of what to put forward, what to keep subordinate 'upon the outer edges', have shown a puerile simplicity much below the level of the characters he himself draws in his own poem. Any theory that will at least allow us to believe that what he did was of design, and that for that design there is a defence that may still have force, would seem more probable. (pp. 254-55; emphasis mine)

⁶ The respective views of Margaret E. Goldsmith, The Mode and Meaning of 'Beowulf' (London: Athlone Press, 1970), p. 266, and Alvin A. Lee, The Guest-Hall of Eden: Four Essays on the Design of Old English Poetry (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1972), pp. 171-73.

⁷ J. R. R. Tolkien, 'Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics,' Proceedings of the British Academy, 22 (1936), 275-76.

It is in this spirit that R. E. Kaske's approach to Beowulf is to be regarded: the idea that the poem has a thematic centre or a governing theme which is worked out in the details of the poem; Kaske thinks this theme is 'the old, widely recognized heroic ideal whose Latin formulation is sapientia et fortitudo.'⁸ The main merit of Kaske's inductive interpretation is its comprehensiveness; it accomodates the digressions as well as the episodes, and, generally, his theory very likely has the approval of most of the leading present-day critics.⁹

Both these critical approaches--the intuitive (Tolkien's) and the inductive (Kaske's)--may be subsumed under an approach that abstracts from a number of selected passages common and dominant themes, and that then pursues and elucidates the implications (if any) of those themes in relation to other parts of the poem.¹⁰ The poem's themes will thus have a structural unity to the degree that the ensuing interpretation is coherent. Since it is the purpose of this present chapter to concentrate on the major

⁸ 'Beowulf,' in Critical Approaches to Six Major English Works: 'Beowulf' through 'Paradise Lost', ed. R. M. Lumiansky and Herschel Baker (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 1968), p. 13.

⁹ E.g., Prof. Morton Bloomfield said, in a Departmental colloquium held on 7 August 1972 in the Beattie Common Room, Univ. of Cape Town, that Kaske's thesis is 'practically indisputable.' Cf. Goldsmith, pp. 217-22, and W. F. Bolton, Beowulf with the Finnsburg Fragment, ed. C. L. Wrenn, 3rd ed., rev. W. F. Bolton (London: Harrap, 1973), p. 82. Wrenn-Bolton's is the basic text used in this chapter and, for convenience and consistency, I have silently cleaned the text of its hyphens, italics, macrons, square brackets, and trails of quotation marks.

¹⁰ E. Carrigan, in his monograph 'Structure and Thematic Development in Beowulf,' Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy, 66, Sec. C, No. 1 (Nov. 1967), also recognises that 'individual sections of the poem can be clearly seen to be concerned with "themes" or ideas rather than with narrative interest, or even with narrative consistency' (p. 3).

sea-passages in Beowulf, and to treat them as metaphoric vehicles, the themes that emerge from these passages, all of which occur, significantly, in 'Part I' (1a-2199b), will be figuratively related to the themes as they arise in 'Part II' (2200a-3182b). Towards the end of the chapter, by showing how the major thematic movement in the poem is related to the metaphoric structure, it will be seen that 'Part II' not only complements but also consummates the themes developed in 'Part I.' Put succinctly, this chapter offers an integrated view of Beowulf by showing how the idea of protection changes and develops from one sea-passage to another, and how this development is related, by the strategic interweaving of the various sea-passages, to the ultimate concerns of the poem.

In the physical universe of the poem the sea is elemental. At the same time, not all the seas in the poem are the same, do not have the same character, and do not play the same structural role. The poetic relation between the seas in Beowulf is, therefore, a figurative one and, as vehicles of the various themes, they are part of the structural meaning of the poem. Thus, while descriptive imagery and thematic context differentiate the seas, the seas themselves help to clarify the structure of the poem as well as its wider meaning. Moreover, the seas are traditional images which,

because contexts change, inevitably become chameleon. They take their color, their meaning, from their surroundings. External evidence can provide knowledge of the tradition . . . But the essential meaning will be determined in the poem itself and must therefore be discovered by way of internal evidence. 11

¹¹ Arthur E. DuBois, 'The Dragon in Beowulf,' PMLA, 72, No. 5 (1957), 821. Lee C. Ramsey, in 'The Sea Voyages in Beowulf,' NM, 72, No. 1 (1971), recognises that the descriptions of the sea voyages help to organise the poem. He views them, however, as conventional, oral-formulaic type-scenes and his interpretation of them is accordingly

The major sea-passages which will be metaphorically interpreted are:

- (i) The Burial of Scyld (26a-52b), (ii) The Geatish Voyage to Denmark (194a-257b), (iii) The Swimming-Match Debate (499a-581a), (iv) The Mere-Fight (1492a-1517b), and (v) The Geatish Voyage Home (1888a-1924b).

(i)

The Burial of Scyld

At one time considered to belong to another poem entirely, the Kingship of Scyld Scefing (1a-52b) is now universally accepted as the proper prologue to Beowulf. The whole of the Proem, therefore, warrants close study, and all the more so for the purposes of this essay since it contains the first major sea-passage in the poem. Such a study will show how many of the poem's main continuities originate in the description of Scyld's departure 'into the Lord's protection' (on Frean were, 27b), and how the imagery anticipates the metaphoric design which emerges through the thematic structure of the whole poem. The total metaphoric pattern is, to quite an amazing degree, an efflorescence from this single iconic crystal.

The opening lines of the poem state the fame of the glorious achievements of the kings of a mighty people, and of Scyld Scefing

limited, suffering from the doubtful, general, and largely insignificant parallelisms and reductive symbolism one expects from the oral-formulaic approach. So it is that Beowulf's sea voyages are said to 'take on some of the sense of mystery, fate, and meaningfulness of the death journey' of Scyld (pp. 58-59). How much? To what exact purpose in terms of the poem itself? And what about Scyld's infant sea-voyage? Again, for the poet and his audience, 'In a real sense, all sea voyages were one' (loc. cit.). One feels obliged to appeal to common-sense and point out that in any sea-voyage there are only a limited number of basic actions, so that general repetition is inevitable.

in particular, who is introduced as the greatest of Danish kings. His early vulnerability (feasceaft, 7a) contrasts strongly with his outstanding deeds of heroism: sceapena breatum,/ monegum nægbum meodosetla ofteah (4b-5b)--either 'took away the meadbenches from hostile troops, from many nations,' i.e., he subjugated them, or 'took away the meadbenches from hostile troops for many nations,' i.e., he protected many nations, he shielded them. The troublesome MS reading eorl (6a) suggests a number of possible meanings which also contrast with Scyld's former predicament. Klaeber retains Kemble's emendation eorlas and rejects, on contextual grounds, initial capitalisation. Wrenn accepts the reading Eorl[e], also on contextual grounds as well as for its historical significance and emendatory restraint. But, even taking egsode eorl[as] as variation of meodosetla ofteah, it seems doubtful whether terrifying the nobles of the enemy would have been as notable an achievement as terrifying the Heruli, the most feared of Germanic tribes. Then again, the phrase could mean that Scyld, an upstart alien, threatened the natural status and security of Danish nobles by his being able to offer so many tribes effective protection.

What emerges from all this is that King Scyld's power is as vast as his wealth, and this is imaginatively portrayed in the half-line ofer hronrade (10a).¹² The poet then adds Scyld's guarantee of continued protection and generosity: the birth of a successor. Pone (13b) is ambiguous: does it refer to Scyld or to his son? Klaeber comments:

Scyld has a son, Bēowulf, who gives promise of a continuation of dynastic splendor. So the Danes need not fear a recurrence of the terrible 'lordless' time they had experienced before Scyld

¹² Adrien Bonjour, 'On the Sea Images in Beowulf,' JEGP, 54, No. 1 (1955), 112, makes this same point.

came, i.e., after the fall of Heremōd (p. 125)

Clearly, the pronoun is meant to embrace both father and son, since ll. 12a-17b emphasise the experience as a universal possibility, the dire misery of a people without a king. And it is only God's generosity that can answer such a need:

fyrenðearfe ongeat,
 þæt hie ær drugon aldorlease
 lange hwile; him þæs Liffrea,
 wuldres Wealdend, woroldare forgeaf
 (14b-17b)

Fyren means sin and crime, yielding Smithers's rendering of fyrenðearfe as 'distress arising out of Heremod's wrong-doing' (quoted by Wrenn-Bolton, p. 97), perhaps hinting, too, at the sin of the Danes themselves, namely, idolatry, and their great spiritual need of faith in the true God. It also means outrage and violence, indicating that the Danes had suffered defeat and disorder without the protective and rallying powers of a king, and that they had also been deprived of their 'mead-benches' as a result of hostile attacks. It means torment and suffering, implied in the previous meanings but adding the dimension of duration, affirming that the Danes suffered these things 'a long time' (HMD, s.v. firen). Possible, too, are the associations of fýren 'of fire,' i.e., of a burning, painful need which could be assuaged only by water, as in fact happens in Scyld's coming from the sea; of the need created by the fire-like ravages of enemies, by the holocaust of a real fire such as the one in The Finnesburg Fragment, or the one in which Danish Heorot itself must perish. Though Wrenn-Bolton's þæt for MS þ is not irrefragable--alternative readings being þe (e.g., Klaeber) and þa (e.g., Sievers)--the sense is again clear: a nation's most terrible time of need is when it has no king, is aldorleas. Finally, having established the supremacy of Danish power and glory, the poet

explains that it is 'on account of' (þæs) their hardship that God granted them (him) woroldare 'honour throughout the world,' 'prosperity in worldly things,' and 'help in the world.' Of course, him could refer to Scyld without any substantial change in meaning, since by now it is apparent what is happening in the Proem: the celebration of Danish heroism as it is embodied in their finest king, and the portrayal of the distress of a people deprived of the munificence and might of their king. The idea of transience is inherent all the time, for God's gifts of honour, prosperity, and help are all seen to be subject to the working of time, to birth and succession, to death and decay. Scyld's renown thus lives on in his progeny, in Beowulf the Dane for example, and extends to many countries, while the mention of one of Scyld's line serves to lead up to Scyld's demise, and to underline the continuance and to enhance the impression of Danish power.

The moralising in ll. 20a-25b makes for the smooth transition to Scyld's declining physical strength, and presents his dependence on his people as less unnatural for a hero of such colossal stature: they (wilgesibas) would joyfully serve him, and he would deserve their protection as a reward for his generosity, for his 'deeds worthy of protection' (lofdædum). I accept most of Wrenn's translation of these lines--'So ought a young man [geong guma, i.e., Scyld¹³] to bring it about by his virtue, by liberal gifts of property . . . under [a] father's protection, that in his old age there may afterwards remain with him eager retainers, who when war comes may give aid to their prince' (p. 97, with corrected comma)--but would prefer

¹³ Though he finally admits that the allusion is probably to Scyld's son, Beowulf the Dane, Klaeber puts forward a strong case in favour of King Scyld himself (p. 126).

Kemble's [guðfr]uma, though of course there is no absurdity in a young leader's being like a father to his men. For instance, Beowulf reminds Hrothgar of his promise to be 'in a father's place' (on fæder stæle, 1479b) for him and be a protector to his 'young retainers' (magobegnum, 1480b) should he (Beowulf) lose his life.

The most obvious meaning of lofdæd is 'praiseworthy deed' or 'deed of glory.' Yet, in the present context, it is lexically possible that lof may mean 'favour' or 'protection,' as it does twice in Andreas:

	Hæfde sigora weard
on þam wangstede	were betolden
leofne leodfruman	mid lofe sinum.
	(ASPR, II, 987b-89b)

'ne læt nu bysmrian	banan manncynnes,
facnes frumbearn	þurh feondes cræft
leahtrum beleggan	þa þin lof berað'
	(ASPR, II, 1293a-95b)

Moreover, the sense 'favour' or 'protection' for lof, which more commonly means 'praise,' is shown to be possible by the comparable semantic development in another formation on the same Primitive Germanic root, namely, lufu, which is also derived from *lubb-.¹⁴

This rendering yields the equation fromum feohgiftum on fæder bearme (21) = lofdædum (24b). The poetry, then, leaves the implications open that, through his 'acts of favour,' a man will succeed in every nation; that the man who offers generosity and protection will win supporters among every nation; that in every nation there is a man who will prosper by his bestowing favour. Or, reversing the effect of the action, and reading lofdædum as an expansion of eft gewunigen (22b) and gelæsten (24a), through deeds that bring him favour a man will prosper in every nation; in every nation

¹⁴ The Oxford English Dictionary . . ., ed. James A. H. Murray, et al. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1933), VI, s.v. lof and love. HMD, s.v. lof.

a(n old) man prospers only so long as he receives protection. By using a technique incorporating highly suggestive diction and rhetorical juxtaposition, the poet has managed to say both: that a man's loving and protective care will bring him praise which, in turn, will also bring him love and protection. And all these crystallise in the central structural theme of the Proem: national need of protection (14).

The Burial of Scyld--'one of the gems of the poem' (Klaeber, p. 122)--presents a multiplicity of images which are nevertheless coherent, and which inform two important contrasting themes in the passage. In the course of the following discussion these themes will emerge and be defined.

Him ða Scyld gewat to gescœphwile,
felahror, feran on Frean wære.
Hi hyne þa ætþæron to brimes faroðe
(26a-28b)

As there is not the customary mention of a departing soul, Scyld may still be alive but on the point of death (hence benden wordum weold, 30a), so that ll. 26a-31b, without full stop and capital after wære, may be one sentence having the syntactic structure 'When (ða) . . . , then (þa) . . . ' with gewat . . . feran being imperfect or conative. If this is so, felahror extends its meaning of strong and vigorous, and becomes a transferred epithet: Scyld is surrounded by his people's activity which the poet, standing back, sees as being generated by and belonging to the king. The king is not merely at the heart of the activity, but is the heart itself. First, Scyld's 'favourite' (swæse, 29a) companions obey his instructions and together they carry their friend and lord to the beach; they serve and love him for his friendship, long protection (lange ahte, 31b), and generosity (leof landfruma, 31a;

beaga bryttan, 35a).¹⁵ Then Scyld receives myriad treasures from distant peoples (of feorwegum, 37a)--perhaps won in war, perhaps taken as tribute or merely as funereal gifts--as well as from his own people (beodgestreonum, 44a), who, if the litotes is intentional, furnish the burial-ship lavishly, reminding themselves of how Scyld came to them at the start of his life: ænne ofer yðe (46a). Nor do his people forget to place his golden standard (segen gyldenne, 47b), symbolising kingship and death (Wrenn-Bolton, p.98), where they can all see it. It will shine and, 'high' above the deck (heah, 48a, alliterates and takes the initial lift, thus being strongly emphasised), it will be the Danes' last glimpse of their king.

One of the themes in the passage now comes into view: a nation's need of a king's provision and protection in times of war and in times of wealth. All the magnificence of the obsequies befits a mighty ruler of many lands. It is out of a sense of gratitude and reverence that his people serve and honour the truly heroic king.

The striking image of the ship reinforces this theme by depicting another aspect of it:

Ne hyrde ic cymlicor ceol gegyrwan
 hildewapnum ond heaðowædum,
 billum ond byrnum
 (38a-40a)

Equipped with enough rich and strong weapons to meet any enemy, the ship is personified (cymlicor; bearme, 40b) and takes on the role of the king's duguð. Hence, it shines (isig), is eager to set out (utfus, 33a) on the long journey, and is accoutred to befit the glorious stature of an heroic king; in other words, it is ready to help and protect the king in his need on the sea. Supporting the people's need of the king's protection, then, is the king's mutual

¹⁵ Cf. 2195a-99b, 2490a-98a.

need of their protection, echoing ll. 20a-25b.

The third aspect of this theme of need and protection is supplied more directly by the sea itself. Just as Scyld protected his people by his power, so the sea protected him by its power. As a baby, exposed and defenceless, Scyld was able to cross the sea unharmed because he had been 'in the sea's embrace' (on flodes æht, 42a). Perhaps he had been aware (-wesende, 46b) of some peril throughout the voyage, had felt the sea's protection very strongly, and so he wanted to be borne to brimes faroðe at his death. And if he had enjoyed the sea's protection as a young boy, Scyld had later enjoyed the sea's bounty, too, in the form of tribute from foreign lands coming ofer hronrade. For that matter, the Danes themselves had also enjoyed the generosity of the sea in receiving Scyld from its waves. So it is that, through obedience to Scyld as well as through faith in the sea, they can entrust Scyld's burial-ship to the sea: leton holm beran, / geafon on garsecg (48b-49a).

There is a poignant ambiguity in him wæs geomor sefa, / murnende mod (49b-50a). More usually taken to mean that Scyld's people wept as (present participle, murnende, suggesting duration) the ship drifted out to sea, the sea itself could, grammatically and in view of Scyld's connection with it, be personified in this way. The heavy caesura in l. 50--'murnende mod. Men ne cunnon'-- would appear to encourage such a reading, since a sharp distinction (but not opposition or disparity), already delineated above, exists between the sea's role and the Danes' role in the life of Scyld Scefing. It is appropriate then that, as two factors in the physical universe, both sea and nation should be understood to lament the death of King Scyld. On the other hand, it might well be argued that the Danes have mixed feelings at this moment. They are happy

that, in a ship well-stocked with Ran's gold, their king is assured of a good reception beneath the sea. Yet the poem's final comment on the burial contains the threads of an overriding theme, larger than the two already isolated:

Men ne cunnon
 secgan to soðe, selerædende,
 hæleð under heofenum, hwa þam hlæste onfeng.
 (50b-52b)

The aristocratic dignity of the whole passage rules out these lines meaning merely that some fortunate sea-traveller, fisherman, or beach-comber eventually found the priceless freight. Scanning these lines, with shifting emphasis, however, produces the following readings: that human kind cannot say where the cargo went; that human speech is inadequate, cannot express what happened to the cargo; that no one can say with certainty; that men only think they know; and that not even the experts can say, men who claim to understand and to be able to interpret the ways of things beyond this world. To sum up: men cannot grasp fully the reality of death because they do not know the reality beyond it. When Scyld's burial-ship sailed away out of the sight of his people, it went beyond the reaches of all human comprehension; when the golden standard glinted for the last time, it was the last his people could know of him, before they and all mankind were left to face an eternal, dark unknown. The golden standard is thus established also as a symbol marking the point of intersection between the temporal and the eternal: it indicates human finitude.

That the poem includes an infinite and indeterminate dimension is implicit in the metrically endorsed lexical counterpointing of hæleð under heofenum and hwa: men who are limited by the universe cannot naturally know that which is beyond the universe. Isaacs recognises this when he explains the figurative potentialities of

the verse hwa þam hlæste onfeng:

The very fact that the indefinite pronoun is used with a personifying verb indicates that any and every body of land (or part of the seas) was subject to personification. Put another way, hwa could mean 'what god' or 'what spirit,' i.e., the god or spirit that gives life to a body of land or water in the first place. 16

In l. 16b, God is called Liffrea, indicating his role as Dispenser of the life of kings, inasmuch as he granted the Danes a successor to relieve their distress. Moreover, feasible syntactically, without the comma, is the reading 'who within heaven,' based on the analogy of under burhlocan (1928a). In any event, had the scop put the question to his audience 'Hwa þam hlæste onfeng?' they would have answered without hesitation 'Him Scyld gewat feran on Freat were,' as the scop told them at the opening of the funeral scene.

Here there is perhaps an allusion to the judgement of Scyld's soul. Wær can also denote a covenant or pledge of trust, as it does in Genesis 2204b, referring to God's promise to Abraham on account of his great faith. We should not disregard the fact that it is, according to Paul, through Abraham's covenant that Gentiles and pagans are included in the salvation of mankind (e.g., Romans 4.16). This theme of faith in God is taken up again and again in Beowulf and, as will become apparent later, is a structurally important theme. There is possibly a suggestion of wær 'sea' or 'ocean' here too (HMD, s.v. wær, II). This ancillary reading becomes acceptable in view of Scyld's 'origin': he comes from God's 'sea' and to it he returns, his 'allotted time of life' (gescæphwīl) having expired. In short, the poem says that Scyld went to his

¹⁶ Neil D. Isaacs, 'The Convention of Personification in Beowulf,' in Old English Poetry: Fifteen Essays, ed. Robert P. Creed (Providence, R. I.: Brown Univ. Press, 1967), pp. 236-37.

destiny under the protection of the covenant of faith made with Abraham, i.e., according to the justice a righteous pagan can expect from his Maker.

It is subtly done. The poet has laced the vivid physical and metaphysical sea-birth and the imagery of the sea-burial with a transcendent reality, so that God emerges as the Alpha and Omega of protective power, which is the dominant idea in the Burial of Scyld. The poem, as Goldsmith says, 'opens the perspective of eternity, and the brilliant foreground picture of Scyld's costly foreign spoils shades from a symbol of magnificent power into a symbol of transience' (p. 81).

Taken as a metaphoric vehicle describing protection, with its central image on flodes æht, the Burial of Scyld has a very potent thematic valency. The Danish king on board the burial-ship leaves the land; he is no longer in control of things there; he has to travel alone. Yet he is safe as long as he has the protection of the armour and the treasure which his people gave him. The sea itself is not hostile to him, he himself asked to be put upon it, and, by analogy, the sea has at least the magnitude of power that Scyld wielded on land. Thus the people who sustained him and the waves that once nurtured him become allied in their protection of Scyld.

In its local context, this sea passage becomes a metaphor illuminating fitts I and II. As Scyld's descendant, Hrothgar represents a very long tradition of Danish power, glory, and heroism as well as of faith in God. And indeed, Hrothgar is a king rewarded for his protection (heresped, 64b) by having a large company of loyal retainers (67a). His magnanimity and generosity find their expression in his order that a hall be built for his people, the

largest hall in the recorded history of mankind, with room enough to hold the bounty of God Himself (67b-73b).

Like Scyld's burial-ship, the hall is well protected and richly adorned with treasures from home and abroad (74a-76a). The builders finish the job very quickly, and the image of activity recalls felahrör (27a). There is a triumphant tone prevailing once the hall is up and in use; it towers above the surface of the earth; its antlers are as indicative as the royal standard of Danish power and munificence, and are perhaps outstretched (-geap, 82a) in a gesture of welcome. Metrically, too, there is a powerful association between Sele hlifade/ heah ond horngeap and segen gyldenne/ heah ofer heafod (47b-48a). Heorot is thus also a beacon shining throughout the countryside and beyond, a light of security and wealth to all peoples under the protection of the Danish king. Travellers would look out for its gleam and, picking it up, would be expectant and hopeful at the prospect of hall-joys. Heorot clearly takes on this aspect later, when:

Guman onetton,
sigon æt somne, oppæt hy sæl timbred,
geatolic ond goldfah ongyton mihton;
~~þæt was foremærost~~ foldbuendum
receda under roderum, on þæm se rica bad;
lixte se leoma ofer landa fela.
(306b-11b)

But there is, at the same time, an underlying current of implications opposing such images of Heorot. For the royal standard in Scyld's burial-ship acquires connotations of death and eternity, so that Heorot is structurally seen to be a doomed place, set on a course through time for destruction. The poem is explicit about its destination: heaðowylma bad,/ laðan liges (82b-83a). Bad suggests the vulnerability, passivity, and slowness of a burial-ship drifting over the sea, so that the speed and vigour with which

Heorot is constructed turns out to be tragically ironic in the face of the unknown inevitability of an oncoming fate. In building Heorot, the Danes, in a sense, eagerly make preparations for their own passing. The building of Heorot, then, marks the beginning of the end of Danish glory and might.

But it also marks their loss of God's protection. According to his faith, Scyld's burial-ship went 'into the keeping of the Lord.' Heorot, however, is exposed to outbreaks of feud and is heading for destruction amid 'the tempestuous surgings of the fires of hatred.' This reversal in Danish fortunes corresponds with the new role of the sea as a divine agency in the affairs of the Danes. The sea now takes on a malignant character, particularly in the image of heaðowylm. Ultimately, of course, it is not the sea but God's use of the sea that either protects or destroys mankind, since God the Protector is also God the Creator (92a-98b). As a device for contrasting the dimensions of human power with those of divine power, the repetition of images here is extremely forceful: folcstede frætwan (76a) with gefretwade foldan sceatas (96) and scop him Heort naman (78b) with lif eac gesceop (97b). In relation to what we read in the Book of Genesis of the origins of land and sea--

2. Seo eorðe soðlice wæs idel 7 æmti, 7 þeostra wæron ofer ðære nywelnyse bradnyse; 7 Godes gast wæs geferod ofer wæteru. . . .

9. God ða soðlice cwæð: Beon gegaderode ða wæteru ðe synd under ðære heofonan 7 æteowige drignys. Hit wæs ða swa gedon.

10. 7 God gecygdre ða drignysse eorðan 7 ðæra wætera gegaderunga he het sæ. 17

--Heorot represents the state of civilised order into which barbarism

¹⁷ Aelfric, The Old English Version of the Heptateuch, Aelfric's Treatise on the Old and New Testament and His Preface to Genesis, ed. S. J. Crawford, EETS, OS 160 (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1922), pp. 81-82.

and chaos can be fashioned by human endeavour, and the Roman pavements (320a-21a) are a clear instance of the high level of civilisation reached by the Danes in Hrothgar's day. Inside the human creation, the scop (and only he) praises God for His creation; inside Heorot, the Danes are safe, enjoying a happy life of ease and prosperity (eadiglice, 100a).

Meanwhile, outside the hall, the powers are gathering in the person of Grendel. Lines 86a-88b and ll. 101b ff. surround the hall, full of merry Danes, and as poetry these lines exist in temporal sequence; in other words, it is a temporal evil that besieges Heorot. Indeed, in the first fitt, the poem makes it clear that the enmity between the Danes and Grendel is to be resolved in time, that it will come to an end, and that just as the glory of Heorot now stands in the place of its destined ruin, so the evil of Grendel and his kind has its own nemesis ('he him ~~was~~ lean forgeald,' 114b). The verb bad occurs again ('se þe in bystrum bad,' 87b), but this time it connotes ambush, predacity, and stealth ('seomade ond syrede,' 161a). Heorot is 'afloat' in the darkness of middangeard, and on all sides lurk the kin of Cain, 'primordial' and 'undifferentiated'.¹⁸

With the introduction of a terrestrial force hostile to Heorot, the phrase on flodes æht (42a) assumes new implications. The Danish nation is now seen to be at the mercy of all the destructive powers on earth, and the noun æht extends this meaning, since, cognate with the verb ehtan 'to pursue' or 'to persecute,' it establishes the sea's role here as attacker and persecutor. Grendel ehtende was, / deorc deabscua (159b-60a): under the protection of darkness, unseen, he attacks like death itself; he desolates Heorot;

¹⁸ W. H. Auden, The Enchafed Flood: or The Romantic Iconography of the Sea (London: Faber, 1951), p. 18.

until finally, like a solitary thane, he has the entire folk-hall to himself, which is an unnatural state of affairs (138a-46a).

This utter perversion of the heroic ideal is depicted in the stark and ironic antithesis of the lines

Heorot eardode,
sincfage sel sweartum nihtum
(166b-67b)

where, metrically as well as syntactically, the image is of the hall decorated with darkness, for the hall is at the bottom of the 'abyss.' The powers of an ambient evil are triumphant; values are reversed; gold is black. Alternatively, albeit stark, Heorot may be understood to be in decay, putrifying like a corpse, and so all who come to the gleaming hall looking for protection and provision find only death inside (cf. Jeremiah 13.16). And yet, as the poem seems to imply in the word deabscua, Grendel's evil is only a shadow of Satan's:

Umbra mortis imitatio antiqui hostis accipitur.
Ipse enim quia mortem intulit, mors vocatur.
. . . quia sicut umbra juxta qualitatem corporis
ducitur, ita actiones iniquorum de specie
imitationis ejus exprimuntur. 19

The images of moral and social deformity grouped round Heorot take on a more universal meaning structurally matching the metaphor of a malignant sea. Suddenly finding themselves in an alien environment, the Danes are faced with the challenge of a serious moral choice, for the hostile sea of life is the onslaught of Satan.

19

The shadow of death is taken to mean the imitating our old enemy. For, since he brought in death, he is himself called death . . . For as the shadow is shaped according to the character of the body, so the actions of the wicked are cast in a figure of conformity to him.

Gregory, Moralium Libri, Bk 4.16.30, PL 75.653A; trans. [James Bliss], Morals on the Book of Job, A Library of Fathers, No. 18, I (Oxford: Parker, 1844), 204.

It is clear from Grendel's origin that supernatural malevolence is implicit in his ravages. Grendel is an eoten (761a), and therefore an enemy of God. The cosmic analogy has a simple ratio: the sea encircles the earth--wlitebeorhtne wang, swa wæter bebugeð (93)--as the evil of Grendel encircles Heorot; sea monsters surround a ship as the kin of Cain surround Eden:

Terra vero hominis paradiscus exstitit, quae hunc
inconcussum tenere potuit, si per innocentiam
stare voluisset. Sed quia ad mutabilitatis undas
per culpam cecidit, ad praesentis vitae maria
post terram venit. 20

The poem defines, in terms of the sea, the physical and moral natures of the Danes, with the result that three seas are differentiated with respect to the Danes: one, the physical sea of life, i.e., the sea of mortality, as presented in, for example, Aelfric's homily on Wednesday in Easter Week ('Nelle ic on sæ eow æteowian, forðan ðe ic ne eom mid eow on geswincfullum yðum andwerdre deaðlicnysses'²¹) and on which King Scyld came and went; two, the metaphysical sea of time, on which Danish glory is passing; and three, the spiritual sea of evil, in which the Danes, assailed by dangers, are sinking.

Through metaphor, the poem describes the complex struggle between the macrocosmic powers of heaven and hell. In their ignorance of the greater, cosmic consequences of their actions, the

20 Now the land of man was Paradise, which might have kept him unshaken, if by force of innocence he could have stood fast, but, because by sin he fell into the waves of a changeful state, after the land he came into the seas of the present life.

Ibid., Bk 9.33.50, PL 75.886B; trans. Bliss, I, 531.

21 The Homilies of the Anglo-Saxon Church, ed. Benjamin Thorpe, II (London: Aelfric Society, 1846), 290.

heathen Danes give homage to idols and pray for protection to the enemy of their own souls. This is the 'hope of the heathen,' which the Christian sees at once to be futile, since it is really no hope at all.²² In pinning the Danes on the sin of idolatry (175a-79b), the poem specifies the cause of their temporal calamity, 'Infandorum enim idolorum cultura omnis mali causa est, et initium, et finis' (Wisdom 14.27). The Danes are too happy; their spirits too high for too long. Life fluctuates like the sea; the axiom of Nature now demands their adversity, their sorrow, and their destitution:

Gif ðu lufast God, þonne fortretst ðu þa woruldlican styrunga; gif ðu lufast þas woruld, heo besencð ðe, forðan ðe heo ne cann aberan hire lufigendas, ac cann bepæcan. Gif ðin heorte floterað on ðissere worulde gytsunge, oððe on yfelre gewilnunge, and þu wylle hi oferswyðan, clypa to Cristes fultume. Ne cep ðu swa swiðe þises middaneardes stylnysse, ac asmea ðine heortan, hwæðer heo on stilnysse sy. Hawa þæt se inra wind þe ne towende. Micel gesæld bið þe, þæt ðu on ðinre gesældre ne forfare.

(Aelfric, Homilies, II, 393)

Like Caedmon, the scop who gave the national hall of the Danes its name is in touch with the Truth, and so he tries to inflame Danish hearts 'to worulde forhogdnisse ond to geþeodnisse þæs heofonlican

²² In her last speech, Juliana says where eternal help may be obtained for the 'greatest need' of all (mæste beaŕfe, ASPR, III, 659b): "Gemunað wigena wyn ond wuldres byrm, / haligra hyht, heofonengla god" (641a-42b). Cf. 47b-54b, 149a-57b, 210a-24b, esp. where she says that heofonrices weard, / mildne mundbora is her hope. See, too, E. G. Stanley's provocative contribution, 'Hæthenra Hyht in Beowulf,' to Studies in Old English Literature in Honor of Arthur G. Brodeur, ed. Stanley B. Greenfield (Eugene, Ore.: Univ. of Oregon Press, 1963), p. 151. Stanley also argues that Beowulf is implicitly damned in the poem. I shall demonstrate that Beowulf is indeed saved. It is not simply a matter of our modern sense of poetic justice that convinces us that Beowulf is not ultimately condemned. As he dies, Beowulf is no longer thinking of worldly things, since he has a sharp awareness of God as Judge (977b-79b; cf. Stanley, p. 147). In any event, for a mediaeval Christian poet the asseveration of his hero's salvation would be a matter of poetic ontology: the mere existence of his poem is an affirmation of positive Christian values.

lives.²³ Thus, by extension, the heaðowylmas laðan liges are given their true and ultimate significance: Heorot's destination is unequivocally and inescapably in the fyres fæbm of hell (185a).²⁴ For the Christian audience who have seen in Heorot the figure of a ship, a safe voyage can be had only aboard the ship of the Church, as prefigured in Noah's Ark (cf. maðmhorda mæst, Exodus, ASPR, I, 368a), its mast bearing the crucified Christ as a sign of strength. To be in the sea, but not taken in by it, is the prime Christian virtue; every Christian should be like a 'hart' whose refuge is in the high hills (Psalm 103.18), i.e., far above the waves. The Danes, on the other hand, because they neither acknowledge the works of God (Metod hie ne cupon, 180b) nor accept His supreme power as heofona Helm (182a), are tossed about and exposed, condemned to the fear, despair, uncertainty, and vulnerability of the faithless heathen.

To sum up. The 'storm' through which Heorot is 'sailing' renders meaningless the normal social order. The Danes abandon the central hall, leaving their king unprotected and their fellow-countrymen unavenged. This storm imagery places Heorot in a world in which disorder is inextricably involved with order. The

²³ 'Bede's Account of the Poet Cædmon,' in Sweet's Anglo-Saxon Reader in Prose and Verse, ed. Dorothy Whitelock (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), p. 45, ll. 8-9.

²⁴ Grendel's home cannot thus be hell if fyres fæbm is hell. In describing the Mere (1357b-76b), the poem appears to take a traditional, figurative picture of hell--such as the one in the seventeenth Blickling homily (Klaeber, p. 183)--and give it a perfectly natural setting in order to point up the hideous reality of evil in the world and thereby to intensify the horror of the true hell of everlasting fire. Goldsmith's explanation of Grendel's role implies much of the same idea: 'the poet found no incompatibility in the simultaneous presentation of Grendel as a giant human enemy and as a devilish enemy . . . Grendel behaved like a devil in being the implacable enemy of mankind, and, like his forefather, Cain, ex maligno erat, in a spiritual sense' (p. 110). The Mere is only a temporal manifestation of certain aspects of the eternal, real hell. See below, pp. 328-29.

Beowulf-poet stands firmly in the literary tradition of Europe when he uses 'the metaphor of the ship of state or society . . . when society is in peril. . . . in danger from within or without' (Auden, p. 19). The savage 'waves' of Grendel's malice 'lash' the consciousness of the Danes and remind them of their perilous state, of the 'sea' of evil 'swirling' in the world about them. For all their martial glory, splendid armour, and heroic kinship, Hrothgar's thanes fail to protect their lord. As he himself later admits:

'Sorh is me to secganne on sefan minum
gumena ængum, hwæt me Grendel hafað
hynðo on Heorote mid his hetepancum,
færniða gefremed; is min fletwerod,
wigheap gewanod'

(473a-77a)

Thus, Hrothgar, as leodgebyrgea (269a), no longer has the power to provide the national protection that won him glory. This is his affliction. Hrothgar is a king in need.

(ii)

The Geatish Voyage to Denmark

The passage under consideration falls into three distinct sections: the first and last balance each other, while the central section forms the core of the contrast between them. The central section itself falls clearly into two complementary halves:

ll. 210a-16b and ll. 217a-28b. The first section (194a-209b) serves to introduce 'Hygelac's thane' into the poem as a warrior prodigious in esteem as he is in size and strength, who gives as reason for undertaking a long voyage (ofer swanrade) his desire to help a famous king in battle; the central section presents a picture of the embarkation, voyage, and landing of the Geats; and the third

(229a-57b) describes the reactions of the Danish coastguard to their arrival. I shall discuss the pivotal section first and then relate it to the two terminal parts.

Fyrst forð gewat; flota wæs on yðum,	210
bat under beorge. Beornas gearwe	
on stefn stigon-- streamas wundon,	
sund wið sande; secgas bæron	
on bearm nacan beorhte frætwæ,	
guðsearo geatolic; guman ut scufon,	215
weras on wilsioð wudu bundenne.	
Gewat þa ofer wægholm, winde gefysed,	
flota famiheals, fugle gelicost,	
oðþæt ymb antid opres dogores	
wundenstefna gewaden hæfde,	220
þæt ða liðende land gesawon,	
brimclifu blican, beorgas steape,	
side sænæssas; þa wæs sund liden,	
eoletes æt ende. Panon up hraðe	
Wedera leode on wang stigon,	225
sæwudu sældon --syrca hrysedon,	
guðgewædo; Gode þancedon,	
þæs þe him yþlade eaðe wurdon.	

The emphasis in the first half of this section is given in the half-line Fyrst forð gewat. The Danish adventure is supremely a matter of time, and the poetry also gives this idea to us in the progressive tempo of nine A-lines. The important word here is Fyrst. It is activated for the first time at l. 76b, in the description of the building of Heorot, where it acquires the subsidiary meaning of 'time in human terms,' i.e., swiftly passing time; and again, at l. 134b, to describe the ruthless frequency of Grendel's raids and, consequently, also of Hrothgar's anguish. Its appearance here, then, creates slightly paradoxical implications: one perceives the joyful excitement and anticipation of the Geatish enterprise together with the sombre and fearful urgency of Hrothgar's grievous manne bearf (201b). The neat ambiguity shows itself in the translations 'Time went on' and 'Time was running out.' On the other hand, the phrase could be construed to mean 'a short time passed during which the following things took place,' ll. 210b-16b expanding l. 210a and

forming a unit, both conceptually and rhythmically. Even metrically, ship and crew are seen to be equivalent: 'bat under beorge. Beornas gearwe'--both are ready and eager to get going (cf. 216). The rapid movement of vision from the ship to the crew, then to the sea ('streamas wundon,/ sund wið sande'), and back again, weaves the image into a unity.²⁵ Further, through parataxis, asyndeton, and active preterite verbs, the audience's perception of the embarkation and the poem's description of it occur simultaneously. Again, the sound and the metre of the first line, 'Fyrst forð gewat; flota wæs on yðum,' forge a lexical connection between flota and Fyrst, so that an associative syntactic relationship is established between them: that the ship is afloat on the waves of 'time,' that there is no going back, and that time itself is 'afloat,' carrying the Geats to Denmark.

In the second half of this section, the crossing of the sea is achieved in the couplet

Gewat þa ofer wægholm, winde gefýsed,
flóta fāmiheals, fūgle gelícost

where the rhythm of the second line recalls the imagery of l. 210. But the rhythm of the whole couplet does not merely enact the voyage; grammatically and metrically, the ship is identified with a bird, most probably a seabird. The obvious similarity is that of appearance, of the ship's prow making foam as it cuts through the water and looking like the white neck of a bird. However, the degree of similitude is a superlative one, inviting further exploration.

²⁵ While I agree with David R. Evans when he says in 'The Sequence of Events in Beowulf, ll. 207-16,' MAE, 32, No. 3 (1963), that the Geats' flota should be imagined 'anchored off-shore' (p. 214), I do not think it necessary, as he does, to postulate a dinghy (bat) in which they seek the 'larger' vessel. Bat under beorge is a variation of perspective only.

For instance, through grammatical connection, the comparison may exist merely in the swift movement of a white-throated seabird being pushed willingly by the wind. Propelled by the wind, a bird moves more by the power of the wind than by its own efforts, it skims the waves as they rise and fall, leaves no trace in the air of its passing, and, especially if it is not a seabird, keeps a look-out for dry land.²⁶

The conjunction oðæt (219a), used critically (as so often in the poem²⁷), terminates the voyage and emphasises its brevity. The periphrastic constructions (gewaden hēfde, 220b, and wæs sund liden, 223b) quicken the rhythm, while, by themselves, the verb-modifiers are able to recapitulate the whole image of departure (forð and ut), travel (þa and þa), and arrival (þanon up hraðe, 224b). Klaeber comments: 'Whether the distance from Bēowulf's home to the coast near Hleiðr . . . could really have been covered in so short a time, is to be doubted' (p. 137). This, then, is the first overt suggestion that there is anything praeternatural about the voyage. Moreover, the last thing the crew do in Geatland is to shove the ship off the

²⁶ HMD, s.v. fleotan 'to skim.' Caroline Brady accurately points out that holm describes 'the distinctive undulating vertical motion' of the high sea ('The Synonyms for "Sea" in Beowulf,' in Studies in Honor of Albert Morey Sturtevant, Lawrence: Univ. of Kansas Press, 1952, p. 33). Eva K. Touster, who interprets the Geatish embarkation as a laborious procedure, nevertheless also finds an increasing tempo from 'Gewat þa ofer wægholm': 'The absolutely regular movement of these lines (all AA couplets) is completely harmonious with the smoothness of the journey' ('Metrical Variation as a Poetic Device in Beowulf,' Anglia, 73, No. 2, 1955, 122). Robert H. Woodward overlooks these connotations in his 'Swanrad in Beowulf,' MLN, 69, No. 8 (1954), 546.

²⁷ The best examples occur at 100b and 2039a. In his A Reading of 'Beowulf' (New Haven and London: Yale Univ. Press, 1968), Edward B. Irving, Jr, devotes a whole section (pp. 31-42) to this stylistic feature.

sand, and they next appear as ða liðende (221a) who merely descry the headland of Denmark. They apparently play little part in the voyage. Their uninvolvedness is further hinted at in the periphrastic, impersonal ba was sund liden.²⁸ This idea reaches its fruition in the climax of the whole section, namely, the Geatish affirmation of their faith in God, in His control over Nature (cf. Wisdom 14.2-4) as well as, by implication, in His help in the forthcoming fighting:

--syrca hrysedon,
guðgewædo; Gode þancedon,
þæs þe him yplade eaðe wurdon.

Their armour and their voices bear witness.

The emphases in this section, then, are on the ship, its cargo and construction; on the crew, their resolution and eagerness, urgency and efficiency; and on the sea, its praeternatural character under supernatural direction.

Turning now to the first section (194a-209b), we realise that Hygelac's thane has had a share in the success of the voyage of the Geats. His command of men is at once associated with his command of the sea, and he has authority (secg wisade, 208b) by virtue of his sea-skill (lagucræftig, 209a). In short, the voyage dramatises Hygelac's thane's 'habitual mode of action' (Irving, p. 49). An ambiguity of sound thus emerges from the phrase Higelaces þegn, / god mid Geatum (194b-25a): that Hygelac's thane is an illustrious Geat, but also that in him resides the blessing of God. This is reinforced by the prosodic counterpoint of the cosmic antithesis in the phrase Grendles dæda (195b). Here, in ll. 194a-98a, Grendel's

²⁸ In view of Thorpe's highly plausible emendation of sund liden to sundlida, this interpretation may seem hazardous. But sundlida would actually clinch my point, for it suggests an even more startling arrival of the Geats, viz., 'Then was the ship at the sea's edge,' a reading based on the analogy of sundes æt ende 'at the water's edge' (The Whale, ASPR, III, 15b).

'deeds' are contained within a setting vigorously heroic, the implication being that Grendel's doings are no threat to the Geats themselves so long as Hygelac's thane is with them. The supernatural feature of the voyage is further pointed to in the observance of favourable omens (204b). So far, then, the sea section serves to enhance the thane's ability and to underline his reliance on God.

The final section (229a-57b) has mainly a contrastive purpose. Firstly, the Geats are met by begn Hroðgares (235a). The resulting contrast with Hygelac's thane is unavoidable. Klaeber, too, notices the point: 'The poet very skilfully prepares [his audience] for a true appreciation of [Hygelac's thane's] greatness by dwelling on the impression which his first appearance makes on strangers' (p. lxi, n. 8). For instance, quaint though the expression may be, hine fyrwyt bræc/ modgehygdum (232b-33a) is a deeply psychological description and conveys, in this context (cf. 1985b and 2784b), an anxious and fearful state of mind. A mixture of fear and a sense of duty upsets the strength of mind of Hrothgar's thane. Secondly, the three chief actions in this fitt are expressed in the preterite form of gewitan (210a, 217a, 234a). The first two forms, both describing the expedition, are used absolutely, whereas the third, describing the movement of Hrothgar's thane, is used reflexively with an infinitive. This latter verbal structure seems to carry less conviction than the first two, and perhaps indicates a cautious or tentative movement:

Gewat him þa to waroðe wicge ridan
 begn Hroðgares, þrymmum cwehte
 mægenwudu mundum

(234a-36a)

The third point of contrast in this section lies in a submerged fluidity of grammar, in which two perspectives work simultaneously to sharpen the meaning. As it stands, the above extract may be

translated 'He went riding on his horse to the shore, thane of Hrothgar, forcefully brandished a great spear in his hands.'²⁹

But in what sense are we meant to take 'brandished'? Was it the coastguard's intention to frighten the Geats? to arrest them?

It would be highly imprudent of him--Beorhtric's reeve comes to mind--first, because of their number and, as we learn later, their physical appearance; second, because their purpose might be a friendly one, as indeed it turns out to be; and finally, because a hollow show of aggression would make nonsense of the speech that follows, and would simply not befit the courtesy of the Danes. 'Brandish,' then will not do, inasmuch as cwehte here needs to be a far less imperious and ostentatious action than a martial flourish. As I take it, cwehte describes merely the bobbing effect on the spear of the horse's gallop, and is done 'with dignity' (prymmun).

Hence these lines refer primarily to the way Hrothgar's thane carries a 'wood-for-showing-one's strength,' and secondarily to the vibrating hand which holds it.

Grammatically, of course, the subject of cwehte could be either beġn Hroðgares (understood) or megenwudu: 'Hrothgar's thane shook with dignity the spear in his hand' (singular for plural) or 'In his hand, the fighting wood vigorously shook Hrothgar's thane.'³⁰ This ambiguity, strange at first, is nevertheless effective because of

²⁹ E. Talbot Donaldson, trans., Beowulf (London: Longmans, 1967), p. 5.

³⁰ The personification of weapons is not unknown: 'For all the variegated uses and forms taken by the convention of personification, the outstanding phase of that convention that remains most vividly in the mind of a reader of Beowulf is the personification of weapons. This personification is continually implicit throughout the poem and comes to the surface frequently' (Isaacs, p. 218). The theme of protection is thus to be found also in the description of weapons: e.g., 303b-06a, 325b-26a, 330b-31a.

the significance of mægen, recalling the unique 'might' of Hygelac's thane just mentioned (196), so that mægen is the principal idea in l. 236a. Moreover, there is also in the verb cwehte an overtone of its cognate cwacian, i.e., of being intransitive (Klaeber, p. 314), yielding the parenthetical statement 'his spear trembled greatly in his hand.' Thus, through suggestive grammar, the poem skilfully achieves a subtle contrast between the coastguard's internal and external attitudes, between his thoughts and his bearing--mepel-wordum frægn (236b)--between his words and his conduct (cf. 287b-89b).

Very much impressed by the Geatish warriors and somewhat startled by their dazzling aspect and 'crackness,' Hrothgar's thane addresses them formally and not without some trepidation and a little complimentary exaggeration, for, someone who knows the sea only as a constant spectator, the coastguard is overawed by these strangers who have travelled in a 'towering' ship (brontne ceol, 238b) over its 'highway' (lagustrate, 239a) and 'deeps' (holmas, 240a) so skilfully (cuðlicor, 244a). The impressiveness of the Geats--to be measured by their earlier exuberant embarkation--is further evidenced in the courtesy, diplomacy, and encomium of Hrothgar's thane, and, in particular, in his attention to Hygelac's thane. The main poetic function of this, of course, is to sustain the characterisation of Hygelac's thane who has remained nameless since his introduction.

The main poetic function of the Geatish voyage to Denmark, when it is read as a metaphoric sea-passage, is to describe the poet's attitude to the physical power of the Geats. The state of fear in Denmark is strongly contrasted with the mood of heroic freedom prevailing across the sea in Geatland, where there are

enough thanes for Beowulf to select the best, and sufficient good ones remaining to permit him to take his men out of the kingdom. The poem, however, emphasises that the Danes' dismay is due to their idolatry and faithlessness; it makes a prayer of thanks the climax of the Geats' voyage and their first significant act in Denmark. On the personal level, Beowulf's self-awareness and sense of righteousness inform his decision to go to the aid of an illustrious human being, a king, who is in need of the protection due to him by thanes. Beowulf is free from fear because he believes in his God-given strength, and his faith is the force that drives the Geatish vessel across the ocean. Within the strategy of the poem's mode, this faith has an even greater consequence: it raises the Geats above the temporal level of the Danish crisis, and whereas the Danes are enslaved by their own destiny in middangeard, the Geats are courageously determined to pass through it. The Geats are not committed to the sea to the same degree that the Danes are. The Geats master the sea to their own purpose, while the Danes believe in the sea to give them purpose; the Sæ-Geatas are free of the world's bitter touch, the Gar-Dene are deep in its grip.

(iii)

The Swimming-Match Debate

In Beowulf's reply in the Swimming-Match Debate, the poet has seized upon the rich imagery of the sea and given to Beowulf's thoughts and feelings the very texture and rhythm of the sea itself. In this way the poem develops a theme of freedom. For a mood of wantonness, a sense of physical freedom, and an almost animalistic delight pervade Beowulf's version of the match. Indeed, Beowulf,

whose limbs still feel the exercise of the recent voyage (sæmbe, 325a), exults in the memory of his adventure in the waves and is momentarily refreshed by the memory. It is also technically important that, at the time when danger and death are cogent possibilities, Beowulf himself should relive his moments of utmost peril and greatest triumph, having of his own accord plunged into the heart of the strife in Denmark:

'No ic on niht gefrægn
under heofones hwealf heardran feohtan,
ne on egstreamum earmran mannon.
Hwæþere ic fara feng feore gedigde,
sipes werig.'

(575b-79a)

At a time when his personal valour is being aspersed with doubt, Beowulf recalls his prowess in the sea in terms so vivid and sensuous that, recharged with his own proven courage, he can speak the truth boldly, eloquently, and freely (581b-94b).

But the most important, single poetic effect of the Swimming-Match Debate is its dramatic irony. By concentrating on the dangers of the sea, the poem creates an ambiguous atmosphere inside Heorot. Hrothgar's heart is broken (modes brecða, 171a); old, wise, and brave, he nevertheless seeks the advice of his counsellors, but they cannot help. Instead, they make sacrifices at heathen temples, so that he alone has faith in the power of God.³¹ And it is only his faith that brings to his people relief from the ravages of Grendel,

³¹ Cf. Arthur Gilchrist Brodeur, The Art of Beowulf (Berkeley and Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press, 1959), p. 198. Like Scyld Scefing, however, Hrothgar does not seem to be specifically Christian, but merely a 'pious monotheist' whose 'retainers may have been thought of by the poet as less pious and aware of God than himself' (Wrenn-Bolton, p. 63). Goldsmith, of course, deals at length and in detail with this whole issue in The Mode and Meaning of 'Beowulf', esp. in Chs 5 and 6. On p. 159 she says: 'In sum, Hrothgar's thoughts and speeches show faith in God as an almighty and benevolent Lord who is the source of men's strength and wisdom.'

which, like the sea in The Rune Poem--'(lagu) byþ leodum langsum
geþuht' (ASPR, VI, 63)--

was þæt gewin to swyð,
laþ ond longsum, þe on ða leode becom
(191b-92b)

Hrothgar has no retainers left to go against Grendel. All the best Danish warriors have failed; it seems too much to expect that the warriors of any other nation will fare any better. So Unferth's skepticism is understandable:

'Ðonne wene ic to þe wyrsan geþingea,
ðeah þu heaðoræsa gehwær dohte,
grimre guðe, gif þu Grendles dearest
nihtlongne fyrst nean bidan.'
(525a-28b)

Beowulf's beot, however, evaporates all doubt:

'Ac ic him Geata sceal
eafod ond ellen ungeara nu,
gupe gebedan. Gæþ eft se þe mot
to medo modig, sibban morgenleoht
ofer ylða bearn opres dogores,
sunne sweglwered suþan scineð!'
(601b-06b)

Upon these words, Hrothgar, in his role as national protector
(brego Beorht-Dena, 609a, folces hyrde, 610a), takes new heart.

Beowulf has said what he wanted to hear. All round Heorot the tension of anxiety has been relaxed: 'Ðer was hæleþa hleahtor' (611a).

But more important, during the debate, Grendel's exact position is unknown. This allows of several implications. Firstly, if he is still in his lair, then the Danes are safe; the terrors of darkness are, for the moment at any rate, in abeyance. After all, Grendel may not come that night, and then in the morning Beowulf and his men could hunt him down in the light just as he has haunted Heorot in the dark. Secondly, if Grendel is just setting out for Heorot, then morgenleoht . . . opres dogores suggests that the day is far advanced in its departure, making way for the approaching

shapes of darkness ('scaduhelma gesceapu scriðan cwoman,' 650) in whose 'company' moves Grendel. (On metrical and syntactic grounds, 'Werod eall aras' (651b) has a sinister ambiguity in the context.) The daylight phrase also suggests, however, that Hrothgar should take heart, for, as sure as the sun will rise next day, Beowulf will conquer Grendel; and that Beowulf is trusting in the protection of God, since the sun is beorht beacen Godes (570a). Thirdly, if it is already dark, then Grendel may be lurking outside Heorot, and the warriors are in danger of being attacked as soon as they lie down to sleep. It is in a night fraught with danger that Beowulf has to exert his courage and exercise his faith, so that the night itself now becomes one of the inevitable forces against which he is fighting for the Danes; it is that particular force which makes it urgent that he should fight now while it is yet light. Finally, the sun assumes so much meaning because the poem uses it to introduce a tone of hope into Heorot. The preceding pictures of the Danes are dark and dismal and negative, so that the prospect of 'morning-light' remedies the æfenleoht (413b).

Recurrent statements of the sea's power also have an atmospheric value in making us bear in mind the quality of life on land and, if metaphors, these statements become more variously symbolic, relating more kinds of experience. By tracing groups of 'sea power' images, of surging and of gripping, we may understand how these complex analogies are built up. We may also see how the poem moves from narrative fact to metaphor, and from image or metaphor (referring only to narrative fact) to metaphor rich in moral and psychological implications. As in creating the analogies between ship and hall, the poem starts from a dramatic necessity: the audience must be told what the attitude of the present generation of Danes is to the

sea, and must learn it through the court spokesman. Although there is a hint of sarcasm in Unferth's vision of the swimming-match, he pictures the sea as a dangerous place on earth, to be avoided by the wise, when he remarks reproachfully: "'ond for dolgilpe on deop water/ aldrum neþdon?"' (509a-10a) and then "'Geofon yþum weol,/ wintrys wylmum; git on wateres æht/ seofon niht swuncon"' (515b-17a).

As if there were an inner rhythm in these Danish responses, the metaphor on wateres æht echoes on flodes æht in the Burial of Scyld.

In this new context, the metaphor does several things at once. It images the sea as a grave, but, owing to its turbidity, the image has none of the sombre stateliness of the royal funeral. Next, the image presented in weol and wylmum is one of heat and surging.

Wylm, however, cannot be completely understood here without its psychological implication, certainly not in view of the poem's use of it so far: heaðowylm (82b) and cearwylm (282a), both in a context of painful heat and referring respectively to Hæorot's fate and Hrothgar's affliction.³² Here, the MS reading is wylm (no gap).

This reading would place wintrys wylm in apposition to both Geofon and wateres æht. The following Standard English rendering is an attempt to convey something of the ironic force of the Anglo-Saxon:

'The deep sea surged with waves: a wintry hell: the two of you in the water's hold grappled for seven nights.' The irony lies in the fact that at that very moment the Danes themselves are, metaphorically speaking, in the 'sea's' grip, suffering in its darkness and cold.

³² Brady comments: 'Wylm expresses the surging and the boiling of the sea. . . . The probability is that the word refers to the movement itself' (p. 34). Randolph Quirk's sensitive linguistic analysis also identifies the emotional content of wylm, 'the lexical relations of which elsewhere are often the antithesis of cold' ('Poetic Language and Old English Metre,' in Early English and Norse Studies: Presented to Hugh Smith on His Sixtieth Birthday, ed. Arthur Brown and Peter Foote, London: Methuen, 1963, p. 161).

Construed in this way, sawylmas (293b) reveals a further dramatic irony, especially since ofer can also mean 'against' (cf. 2409b), and it is as if Wulfgar, eager to see Beowulf stay in Denmark, is speaking, with deliberate challenge, of the troubles at Heorot in terms to which Beowulf will respond most fervently, knowing Beowulf's sea-background. Interestingly, Beowulf himself uses a sea term, sælac (1652a), when referring to Grendel's head and the golden hilt.

Actually, the full depth of the irony of Unferth's words is made explicit only later while Hrothgar examines the golden hilt, ancient work of giants:

On ðam was or writen
fyrngewinnes, syððan flod ofsloh,
gifen geotende, giganta cyn;
frecne geferdon; þæt was fremde þeod
ecean Dryhtne; him þæs endelea
þurh wateres wylm Waldend sealde.
(1688b-93b)

Grendel is a creature of antediluvian origin; he escaped the great Flood which destroyed his ancestors, the enemies of God. Unferth's words also have reference to the water that drowned the race of giants and so affirm God's part in the defeat of Grendel. But Unferth fears the sea, the instrument of God's wrath against the giants. What he fails to realise, lacking faith, is that God is using Beowulf to do the work of the sea. The war of heaven is thus once again attested to in the poem's metaphoric structure. Even before Beowulf's appearance as a righteous thane, the poem, anticipating his later victories, gives him indirectly in the Proem an aura of divine favour without his having earned it. For, anyone coming across the sea to the aid of a helpless people cannot escape being associated with Scyld Scefing. And, of course, Beowulf's Danish namesake, King Scyld's son, was also a divine blessing.

The main point of attack in Unferth's speech is in Beowulf's

performance against Breca, man against man:

'he þe æt sunde oferflat,
 hæfde mare mægen . . .
 Beot eal wið þe
 sunu Beanstanes soðe gelæste.'
 (517b-18a, 523b-24b)

'He got the better of you in the water, and there was nothing you could do about it . . . All his words against you Beanstan's son put into action in no uncertain manner.' Unferth's ideas are strong; but the basis of his argument remains that of a human contest. Without going into the forensic subtleties of the debate,³³ one can easily see that the guts of Beowulf's speech is in the lines:

'oppæt unc flod todraf, 545
 wado weallende, wedera cealdost,
 nipende niht, ond norþan wind
 heaðogrim ondhwearf. Hreo wæron ypa,
 wæs merefixa mod onhræd.
 Þær me wið laðum licsyrce min, 550
 heard, hondlocen, helpe gefremede,
 beadohrægl broden on breostum læg
 golde gegyrwed. Me to grunde teah
 fah feondscaða, fæste hæfde
 grim on grape; hwæpre me gyfeþe wearð, 555
 þæt ic aglæcan orde geræhte,
 hildebille; heaþoræs fornam
 mihtig meredeor þurh mine hand.'

The conjunction oppæt is again used critically here (see above, p. 303) to form a contrast with the foregoing image of the two young warriors in the water together. Beowulf had to face the sea's attack alone. As Unferth does not exploit the opportunity to say that Breca had to fight off sea creatures on his way home, we may assume that Breca made it home unmolested and without event, and this would account for Beowulf saying: "'Breca næfre git/ æt heaðolace, ne gehwæper

³³ E.g., Beowulf's reply to Unferth's insinuations of cowardice and inferior physical strength is stated as a point-by-point refutation of the charges. The anaphora of the pattern No ic has an important rhetorical function. Read consecutively, 541b-43b, 575b-77b, and 581b-86b dramatise the terms of Beowulf's flat denial of all Unferth's assertions.

incer,/ swa deorlice dæd gefremede/ fagum sweordum" (583b-86a).

In the end, however, Geatish actions alone will convince Unferth, as they convinced the coastguard who watched the Geats come ashore, that Beowulf can rid the Danes of Grendel. Afterwards, when Beowulf has fulfilled his boast, Unferth shows a spirit of generosity, courtesy, and sportsmanship (Klaeber, p. 150).

There is no little ambiguity in the MS reading of l. 548a, namely, heaðogrim 7hwearf.³⁴ Four worthwhile possibilities exist. One, that the verb form onhwearf is meant, thus Wrenn-Bolton and Klaeber: 'turned against [us],' i.e., the weather changed unfavourably for them; or two, the verb form onhwearf, so Trautmann and Holthausen, having no markedly different meaning. Three, hwearf may be meant to be taken as a further adjectival qualification,³⁵ heaðogrim ond hwearf, 'brutal and unpredictable.' Finally, there is a probable occurrence of hwearf as substantive in The Finnesburg Fragment, l. 34a (see Wrenn-Bolton, p. 292), so that the fourth possible reading is on hwearf 'in a crowd,' and the five nouns describing the tumultuous, wintry sea could reasonably be said to make up that crowd. This whole structure of associated meanings may be contained in the martial image of the natural elements--sea, sky, and wind--all in a state of cosmic mutiny.

On the moral level of interpretation, Beowulf's exposure to the attacks of sea-creatures means that he is in the third sea, the sea of evil, for according to the Church Fathers 'everything in the sea

³⁴ A. J. Wyatt, ed., Beowulf with The Finnesburg Fragment, rev. ed. R. W. Chambers (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1914), p. 30.

³⁵ Proposed by Grein, citing Old Norse hverfr 'shifty' (Wyatt-Chambers, loc. cit.).

is bent on the destruction of man.'³⁶ Consider, for example, how in Psalm 103, essentially praising God's creation and describing the sea as an immeasurable, ordered region of the world--

24 hu gemicclode synd weorc þin driht ealle on
 wisdom þu dydest gefylleð is eorðe spede þinre
 25 þeos sæ micel 7 rum handum þær wyrmas þara ne
 is gerim nytena medmiclu mid micclum 26 þær scipu
 þurhfarað draca þes þone þu hywodeð to bysmrienne
 him 37

--the sea is figuratively interpreted as a place of spiritual desolation, a home far mancynne fram (110b) and, in terms of Christian symbolism, the domain of Satan in the role of Leviathan, banished to the sea after his fall and reappearing as the 'sea-dragon' to snatch careless human beings, 'sending up tremendous pulsations which drag the soul downward, the sinking of the drowned providing an exact analogy for a moral fall' (Covo, p. 36). Metaphorically, then, Grendel is also Leviathan, and the souls of the Danes in Heorot are like the treasures in the bosom of a royal ship:

Wiht unkwælo,
 grim ond grædig, gearo sona wæs,
 reoc ond repe, ond on ræste genam
 þritig þegna; þanon eft gewat
 huðe hremig to ham faran,
 mid þære wælfylle wica neosan
 (120b-25b) 38

³⁶ Jacqueline Covo, 'The Lake of Darkness: Marine Imagery in Relation to Themes of Disruption in Medieval Poetry,' Diss. Brandeis 1967, p. 34.

³⁷ The Vitellius Psalter: British Museum MS Cotton Vitellius E. xviii, ed. James L. Rosier, Cornell Studies in English, No. 42 (Ithaca, N. Y.: Cornell Univ. Press, 1962), pp. 256-57.

³⁸ Cf. Riddle 3:

þær bið ceole wen
 slibre sæcce, gif hine sæ byreð
 on þa grimman tid, gæsta fulne,
 þæt he scyle rice birofen weorþan
 (ASPR, III, 28b-31b)

According to Augustine, moreover, all dragons are demons serving in Satan's army (sub diabolo militantia³⁹). But the young Beowulf is able to overcome the merefixas because it has already been made possible by God according to the text 'þu getrymedest on mægene þinan sǣ þu swenctest heafda dracena on wæterum' (Psalm 73.13; Rosier, p. 178).

Both images in Beowulf's account, that of Nature at war and that of an evil and predatory darkness, reflect his first speech to Hrothgar:

'yðde eotena cyn, ond on yðum slog
niceras nihtes, nearobearfe dreah'
(421a-22b)

This supplies the metaphoric context of Beowulf's central image in the debate, i.e., Hreo wæron yða (548b), which remains pivotal even when (as in Klaeber) the half-line is not preceded by a full stop. The personification in yðde is of the kind Isaacs calls 'inversions of personification'; in this instance, a human being is described in terms of an inanimate thing (op. cit., p. 217). We hear first that the Geatish elders advised Beowulf to undertake his mission because they were aware of his mægenes cræft (418a), and, partly because it was Beowulf's first appearance in the poem, we recall easily how they read the omens for 'Hygelac's thane' and how he led his men to the beach, a warrior lagucræftig. But, by the time we have passed through yðde, on yðum slog, nearobearfe dreah, wræc (423a), and forgrand (424a), our understanding of lagucræftig has been distended to include the sea as an heroic warrior, having 'þritiges/ manna mægen-cræft on his mundgripe' (379b-80b), as a divine agent, destroying giants. It is in this iconic relationship between the temporal and the eternal that

³⁹ Enarrationes in Psalmos, Ps. 73.14, CL 39.1014; quoted by Goldsmith, p. 138, n. 1.

we perceive the essence of the spiritual metamorphosis, which is at the centre of the poetic meaning of Beowulf. Accordingly, Beowulf himself is the sea in its destructive role, a weapon used by God against the race of giants (113b), and of this kind is the Geatish warfare with which Beowulf vows to acquaint Grendel (601b-03a). Beowulf will fight with the power of the Deluge itself, as an instrument wielded by God. As if victory over Grendel has already been decreed, Beowulf speaks with strength of faith when he offers to protect the Danes from Grendel, to be their eotonweard (668b). The poem itself makes it clear that

Hæfde kyningwuldor
Grendle togeanes, swa guman gefrungon,
seleweard aseted

(665b-67a)

Hrothgar, who has been quick to perceive this is God's doing (381b-84a), puts on Beowulf the mantle of protector of the people (655a-57b), and Beowulf in turn entrusts himself to God's protection (669a-70b).

Bearing in mind the fact that punctuation mattered little to the Anglo-Saxons, and that the reading speed would have allowed for the slow assimilation and complete appreciation of such an important statement as 421a-22b (quoted above), we begin to see the unity of the image once we have realised the syntactical possibilities. Some of the more interesting ambiguities are that Beowulf first 'overwhelmed' the giants and 'scattered' them in his onrush; he then smote them 'into the waves,' drove them beneath the surface; and he then slew them as they came at him 'in waves,' i.e., one after the other or from different angles. Taken as variation of eotena cyn, niceras become evil sea-demons. Alternatively, nihtes may be construed figuratively with nearobearfe, describing the direness and closeness of Beowulf's fight with the emissaries of evil: '[I]

suffered evil's dire straits.' Summing up, we may say that the imaginative coherence of these lines consists in the metaphoric identity of rebellious giants and creatures that attack in the dark; in short, it consists in a force of evil that is too strong for man to cope with alone.

But if the ecenas have a prodigious strength, they have a pride equal to it. Deformed humanity inimical to God, the outcast kin of Cain dared

to fortify earth against heaven, and in the madness of ungoverned pride to prepare an attack upon the very God of all. On account of these things, when they conducted themselves thus, the all-seeing God sent down upon them floods 40

Augustine sees two traditions of patristic interpretation of the antediluvian origin of giants as it is given in the Book of Genesis.

Augustine gives his own version:

videntes autem angeli Dei filias hominum quia bonae sunt, sumpserunt sibi uxores ex omnibus quas elegerunt. . . . Gigantes autem erant super terram in diebus illis et post illud, cum intrarent filii Dei ad filias hominum, et generabant sibi; illi erant gigantes a saeculo, homines nominati.

(Ch. 6.2, 4) 41

The one patristic tradition recognises that the giants were the spawn of fallen angels and earthly mothers; the other that they were

⁴⁰ Goldsmith quotes this translated portion of Eusebius's Ecclesiastical History and says that so magnetic a subject would, despite its Greek original, very likely have been known (as Bede points out, HEGA, Bk 4.2) to the students of Theodore and Hadrian, such as Aldhelm (pp. 107-08).

⁴¹ "angels of God saw that the daughters of men were good; and they took to wife such of them as they chose. . . . The giants were on the earth in those days and also afterwards, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men and engendered children for themselves. These were the giants that were of old, the men of renown."

The City of God against the Pagans, Bk 15.23, trans. Philip Levine, LCL, IV (1966), 552 (unitalicised) and 553.

the offspring of flesh only. Augustine accepts the latter, arguing that the word angeli can refer to either spiritual beings or to those human beings who are citizens of the heavenly city living temporarily on earth (ibid., pp. 546, 550). In its purely spiritual sense, the word defines; in its human sense, it merely designates. It was these heaven-born men (descended through Seth) who sank to the level of the earth-born society of men (Cain's offspring) which already included giants at the time when the sons of God mated with the daughters of men; and some, though not all, of their children were also giants (pp. 552, 558). Now, Gregory, commenting on Job 3.9 'Expectet lucem [nox], et non videat, nec ortum surgentis aurorae,' says that Satan

una persona est cum cuncta collectione reproborum . . . [qui] dum ad persuasa deserviunt, velut sub-
 junctum capiti corpus inhaerent. Quod ergo de hac
 nocte, id est antiquo hoste dicitur, dignum est ut
 ad corpus ejus, id est ad iniquos quosque derivetur.

42

Thus, while I take Goldsmith's point to be correct, that 'the Grendel kin are physical creatures, in fact, misshapen and denatured human beings, such as existed, according to the scriptural story, before the Flood' (p. 107), I would call all Cain's offspring satanic angels ('ill-begotten ones' untydras, 111a) to designate their spiritual union in the body of Satan; the eotenas, ylfe, orcneas, and gigantas are, then, the fleshly representatives of the evil brood of spiritual renegades, whom God 'carceribus caliginis inferi retrudens tradidit

42

is one person with the whole company of the damned . . . [who] whilst they minister in the things he prompts, hold fast to him like a body joined below to the head. And so it is meet that all that is said of this night, i.e. of our old enemy, should be applied to his body, i.e. to all wicked persons.

in iudicio puniendos reservari.⁴³ In patristic thought, the giants are characterised by two features, pride and physical strength. By the first of these, the giants are in company with the fallen angels. Bede comments: 'Quodque dicit, Viri famosi, sic intelligendum est quasi dixisset superbi vel fortes.'⁴⁴ Finally, Gregory does not hesitate to formulate the 'angelic' equation: 'Gigantes enim vel apostatas angelos, vel superbos quosque homines, nil obstat intelligi.'⁴⁵

It is within this larger context that Beowulf's image of a satanic sea, Hreo wæron yba, functions as a complex metaphor and gains its optimum thematic valency. For, through its proximity to images of disorder and battle, the image of 'contentious' waves absorbs these associations, the waves becoming violent and lawless, and hence anathematised, as well as hostile to men. In true Celtic tradition, the young Beowulf lays into the sea itself, which is 'swollen' (weallende) with anger with its waves 'in battle-array' (heaðogrim on hwearf).

The idea of a satanic sea was also a patristic commonplace, as Augustine implies in his explication of Psalm 92.3-4, 'Elevaverunt

⁴³ "'thrust them into dungeons of nether gloom and committed them there to be held for punishment at the time of judgement.'" Augustine 'quoting' 2 Peter 2.4, The City of God, Bk 15.23, trans. Levine, pp. 550, 551. The Genesis-poem calls the satanic angels of earth fege þæda, wærlogan, dædum scyldige, gigantmæcgas, gode unleofe, and micle mansceaðan, metode laðe (ASPR, I, 1265a-69b).

⁴⁴ 'When [Scripture] speaks of men of renown, it is to be understood as if it had said proud or strong.' In Pentateuchum Commentarii, 'Genesis, Capita V-VIII,' PL 91.224D; translation mine.

⁴⁵ 'by "giants," either apostate Angels, or all proud men may without objection be understood.' Moralium Libri, Bk 17.21.30, PL 75.25A; trans. Bliss, Morals on the Book of Job, A Library of Fathers, No. 21, II (Oxford: Parker, 1845), 298.

flumina, Domine elevaverunt flumina vocem suam, elevaverunt flumina fluctus suos, a vocibus aquarum multarum,' which he first interprets as the Christians lifting up their voices to God in praise and thanksgiving when they heard of the release of John and Peter (Acts 4.23-24); he then interprets verse 4 using this image: 'A vocibus aquarum multarum mirabiles suspensurae maris: id est, huius saeculi. Cum coepisset Christus tantis vocibus praedicari, coepit irasci mare, coeperunt crebescere persecutiones.'⁴⁶ The beginning of the strife at Heorot (89b-101b) has a similar pattern of ecstatic praise and worldly joy arousing powers of daemonic nihilism. The following summary of Irish folklore relating to manifestations in Nature of the war in heaven evinces this daemonisation of the sea:

The sea also sided with Lucifer and was punished, so that ever since it ebbs and flows, is rough and restless, and will, on the last day, shrink into a small shell to hide. Another reason given for the restlessness of the sea is that it promised God never to drown anybody; it broke its promise and was punished. A third reason for its unhappiness is that it gave evidence against Christ during his trial. . . . The angels who sided with Lucifer were expelled from heaven. . . . and those who had fallen into the sea became the underwater beings. 47

Reading the Swimming-Match Debate as a metaphoric vehicle enables one to see Grendel's role as a satanic angel more vividly. As an eoten (761a), Grendel is a flesh and blood creature; but he is also an underwater creature, accustomed to darkness. He is also not

⁴⁶ 'from the voices of many waters, wonderful are the hangings of the sea; that is, the waves of the world. When Christ had begun to be preached by so powerful voices, the sea became enraged, persecutions began to thicken.' Enarrationes in Psalmos, Ps. 92.3-4, CL 39.1298; trans. [C. E. Pritchard], Expositions on the Book of Psalms, A Library of Fathers, No. 32, IV (Oxford: Parker, 1850), 339.

⁴⁷ Seán Ó Súilleabháin, 'Etiological Stories in Ireland,' in Medieval Literature and Folklore Studies: Essays in Honor of Francis Lee Utley, ed. Jerome Mandel and Bruce A. Rosenberg (New Brunswick, N. J.: Rutgers Univ. Press, 1970), p. 258, A.3.6.

distinct from either the fallen angels or the daemonic sea.

Grendel's fierce attacks are motivated by satanic envy: because he knows that he himself is God's enemy, he cannot brook anyone who is not.⁴⁸ He 'freezes' the heroic spirits of Hrothgar's thanes into a state of fear, causes division among them, dislocates their social structure, and drives them into a false hope, void of faith in the true God. Grendel devours the Danes as though he were feasting on Heorot at a banquet, and in so doing he not only defiles the folk-hall but also sullies the pristine fame and glory of the Danish kings. Most important is the fact that of all the many nations geond þisne middangeard (75b) that helped to build Heorot, only one comes to the need of Hrothgar. Hope comes, in fact, from Geatland in the east, and at last Hrothgar sees an end to the havoc wreaked by Grendel, who is limited to the temporal world and whose daemonic power is subject to God's will. Drained of courage, the hall of the Danes, idel ond unnyt (413a), fills with fear.

The whole metaphoric passage also clarifies Beowulf's role. The supernatural significance of Beowulf's ordained strength is unequivocally stated in ll. 696b-702a:

Ac him Dryhten forgeaf
wigspeda gewiofu, Wedera leodum,
frofor ond fultum, þæt his feond heora
ðurh anes cræft ealle ofercomon,
selfes mihtum. Soð is gecyþed,
þæt mihtig God manna cynnes
weold wideferhð.

This is another way of saying that Beowulf is carrying out God's will against His enemies. Divine and human purposes are harmonious:

⁴⁸ Cf. 'sed invidentia illa [erat] diabolica qua invident bonis mali nulla alia causa nisi quia illi boni sunt, illi mali' 'Cain's envy [was] rather of that diabolical sort that the wicked feel for the good just because they are good, not wicked like themselves.' Augustine, The City of God, Bk 15.5, trans. Levine, pp. 428 and 429.

no man-made weapon ('ænig ofer eorþan irenna cyst,' 802) can kill Grendel and, in any event (ac, 804a), Beowulf has decided not to use weapons against Grendel. Beowulf's coming to Hrothgar's aid represents the Geatish sense of heroic honour and justice: to help a brave man in his need is the right action. Accordingly, in his solitary struggle against the sea, the young Beowulf's weapons serve to protect him like loyal thanes; this is because Beowulf is not a passive victim. In a last stroke of malice, the sea, defeated, dumps (obbar, 579b) him far from home 'in the north of Norway' (Klaeber, p. 148), and leaves him there to the mercy of the wind.

The wind is the ally of Satan, under God's wrath, vagrant (hwearf) and unwanted (heaðogrim) (Ó Súilleabháin, p. 258, A.4). As in the first book of Virgil's Aeneid and in the third riddle of the Exeter Book, the tempestuous sea is the work of the riotous (heaðogrim) and restless (hwearf) wind. In this instance it happens to be the norþanwind (547b). Gregory elucidates: 'Aquilonis nomine, in sacro eloquio appellari diabolus solet,'⁴⁹ who binds up the hearts of the nations with the iciness of insensibility.

Courage and endurance (ellen deah, 573b) are the only heroic virtues left to a man in such a situation; outnumbered by ruthless and implacable foes, there is only one thing the righteous man can do: doggedly fight against the 'currents' of destruction, with resolute re-action oppose evil at every turn, at all costs. The corporateness of all marine things now accepted, obbar, in association with the banquet of sea-beasts (562a-64b), describes the sea's action in gross terms: it casts Beowulf ashore as if disgorging him.

⁴⁹ 'By the title of the "north," in Holy Writ the devil is used to be designated.' Moralium Libri, Bk 17.24.34, PL 76.26A; trans. Bliss, II, 300.

There is also a grim sarcasm in the half-line þæt hie me begon (563b) where, bearing the principal stress, the first-person pronoun contrasts Beowulf's heroic retaliation with the Danes' wretched impotence.

Beowulf is saved by the ordained workings of Nature. The sun, too, has its place and its turn. There is a triumphant tone in these lines:

Leoht eastan com,
beorht beacen Godes; brimu swaþredon
þæt ic senæssas geseon mihte,
windige weallas. (569b-72a)

Placed at the end of a sequence of battle-images, beorht beacen Godes becomes God's battle-standard symbolising divine protection, power, and stability; only God can protect men from the satanic angels in middangeard. As Creator, He is outside of time:

Ortus quippe divinitatis ejus ante et post non habet.
Cui dum semper esse est per aeternitatem, dum omne
quod labitur circumscibit, intra semetipsum temp-
orum discursus claudit. 50

Hence, in combating supernatural forces, the strongest fleshly power in this region of creation, i.e., as embodied in Beowulf himself (788b-90b echoes 196a-97b), is inadequate, and so protection must come from beyond the temporal world.

Seen as a metaphor describing the fight with Grendel, the swimming-match serves the purpose of developing the dimensions of the theme of protection and need, established in the two preceding

50

For the origin of His Divinity has no before and after. And while Its ever being is through all eternity, while It circumscribes every thing which passes away, It bounds within Itself the ebbings and flowings of times.

Ibid., Bk 29.2.2, PL 76.478B; trans. Bliss, Morals on the Book of Job, A Library of Fathers, No. 23, III (Oxford: Parker, 1847), 303.

sea-passages, to include the whole of middangeard as a cosmic battle-field. The swimming-match thus serves a dual purpose: in relation to Hrothgar's affliction, Beowulf's mastery of the sea foreshadows the vanquishing of Grendel and is cause for joy (607a-12a); in relation to Beowulf himself, his personal achievement and honour, it anticipates his victories not only over Grendel and his mother but over the Mere itself. And the entire Swimming-Match Debate becomes, in effect, a metaphor for heroic freedom in which the whole human being, spiritual and physical, participates in the verbal challenge. Beowulf expresses the exultation of his youth in combination with his present heroic commitment to personal achievement. The poem succeeds, in fact, in translating Beowulf's memory of adventurous childhood experience into a metaphor for the spiritual freedom and self-awareness in which Beowulf revelled as an adolescent and on which he depends as a man. As Tolkien has pointed out, in the balanced tension between Beowulf's youth and old age, like the balance between the two half-lines of Anglo-Saxon poetry, Beowulf the poem has its artistic life.⁵¹

(1v)

The Mere-Fight

The symbol of Beowulf's victory in Heorot is Grendles grape (836a). The image of a powerful hand recurs with some significance throughout the poem. For the moment, I am interested only in

⁵¹ J. R. R. Tolkien, 'Prefatory Remarks,' in Beowulf and The Finnesburg Fragment, trans. John R. Clark Hall, rev. ed. C. L. Wrenn (London: Allen & Unwin, 1950), p. xliii.

Beowulf's exploits in 'Part I,' the two most memorable examples of manual might in 'Part II' being Beowulf's crushing Daeghrefn to death with his bare hands (2501a-08a) and his misfortune of breaking Naegling with too hard a thrust (2680b-84b). Grendel holds, through the power in his clutches, both the moors and the hall of the Danes, and it is only the strength in Beowulf's 'hand-grip' (mundgripe, 965a) that breaks this fiendish hold. These two powers are opposed in a hondraes for Heorot, as Beowulf calls it later (2072a). And the outcome is that Beowulf's words before the encounter--that he may be the one to end up feondgrapum fæst (636a)--are ironically prophetic, for it is Grendel who discovers he is on grames grapum (765a), and his whole right arm is wrenched off. There is also a mordant irony in Beowulf's words when he tells Hygelac that Grendel did not want to leave Heorot idelhende (2081b), "'ac he mægnes rof min costode,/ grapode gearofolm"' (2084a-85a).

Hygelac's thane thus puts an end to the attacks of the giant Grendel (761a; 1353) in the only way Hrothgar's thanes can comprehend the spiritual significance of Beowulf's victory: he exhibits his physical strength, which is God-favoured (670; 1270a-73a), in action against the monstrous strength of their attacker, who is one of Cain's kin. Herein, too, is the secret of successful Geatish warfare: to fight with all manly courage for righteousness' sake. The need of the Danish comitatus has been met through heroic action in a righteous cause:

Hæfde East-Denum

Geatmeca leod gilp gelæsted,
 swylce oncybðe ealle gebette,
 inwidsorge, þe hie ær drugon
 ond for þreanydum þolian scoldon,
 torn unlytel. (828b-33a) 52

Since mund can also mean 'protection,' mundgripe conveys the notion of kingly power inherent in Beowulf's heroic action (856b-61b),⁵³ and on this aspect of the theme of protection the poem concentrates in its treatment of Beowulf's role as national protector in 'Part II.'

Hrothgar's congratulatory address to Beowulf re-emphasises the third aspect of the theme of protection, namely, divine protection. Standing on the steps of Heorot, he sees Grendel's hand displayed between the roof's antlers, and says:

'Disse ansyne Alwealdan þanc
lungre gelimpe.' Fela ic laþes gebad,
gryнна æt Grendle; a mæg God wyrcean
wunder æfter wundre, wuldres Hyrde.'
(928a-31b)

Hrothgar is well aware that Beowulf's eorlic ellen (637a) succeeded only by the power of God:

'Nu scealc hafað
þurh Drihtnes miht dæd gefremede,
ðe we ealle ær ne meahton
snytttrum besyrwan.' (939b-42a; cf. 699a)

Hrothgar seems to imply that what his thanes needed was Beowulf's wisdom, i.e., his spiritual insight. (Lines 1056a-57a confirm this impression.) Beowulf has the spiritual insight to see God's protecting hand, whereas, up to now, Hrothgar's Danes have heard only of God's creative hand.

In the figurative dialectic of the poem, Grendel's home symbolises the moral negation of Heorot, it is middangeard without the sons of God. But the Mere is not hell itself, just as Heorot is not heaven itself: on the one hand, for instance, the Mere inflicts no punishment on its inhabitants; on the other, Heorot is a created reality. Heorot represents merely the microcosm of middangeard in

⁵³ Interestingly, a hand is possibly used as synecdoche referring to a warrior in 1343b (Aeschere) and in 2684b (Beowulf).

which dwell, according to Augustinian birthrights, citizens of earth as well as citizens of heaven. Yet, in presenting the Mere, the poem most certainly uses some of the Christian commonplaces describing the underworld. Malone sees this as the design of a poet who 'gives us not a confused and distorted description of natural scenery but a consistent and carefully-wrought picture of a hell on earth, an imaginative construction based on traditional Christian ideas about hell.'⁵⁴ And the poet's purpose is clearly a poetic one. The metaphor of roderas reotað (1376a) embodies in language the action of King Hrothgar's imagination upon the terrible physical universe to find a reality sympathetic with his own present sorrowful psychophysical universe. But it is not the Mere that is sad; it is the sky above it that 'weeps,' and it is the air that is heavy as a result of (þonon, 1373a) the Mere. The Mere represents defective Nature, merely the presence in the natural order of satanic evil--even to animals that know the terrain well and that can defend themselves against natural foes (1368a-72a)--just as the Grendels represent the presence in human society of that evil. But the Mere is not simply a natural extension of the characters who inhabit it, and evil because the monsters are evil; it is, in itself, not a heorustow (1372b). The meaning of the Mere is that, while the evil of Cain's kin belongs to the physical world of knowable reality, its evil is neither physical or spiritual but both. C. S. Lewis's warning will clarify the point:

We are often told that primitive man could not conceive pure spirit; but then neither could he conceive mere matter. A throne and a local habitation are attributed to God only at that stage when it is still

⁵⁴ Kemp Malone, 'Grendel and His Abode,' in Studia Philologica et Litteraria in Honorem L. Spitzer, ed. Anna G. Hatcher and K. L. Selig (Bern: Francke, 1958), p. 306.

impossible to regard the throne, or palace even of an earthly king as merely physical objects. In earthly thrones and palaces it was the spiritual significance--as we should say, the "atmosphere"--that mattered to the ancient mind. As soon as the contrast of "spiritual" and "material" was before their minds, they knew God to be "spiritual" and realised that their religion had implied this all along. But at an earlier stage that contrast was not there. To regard that earlier stage as un-spiritual because we find there no clear assertion of unembodied spirit, is a real misunderstanding. You might just as well call it spiritual because it contained no clear consciousness of mere matter. . . . it is quite erroneous to think that man started with a "material" God or "Heaven" and gradually spiritualised them. He could not have started with something "material" for the "material," as we understand it, comes to be realised only by contrast to the "immaterial," and the two sides of the contrast grow at the same speed. He started with something which was neither and both. 55

It goes without quoting that the imagery in the Mere-Fight passage centres on the idea of bondage: bondage, in the power of the water itself as well as in the clutches of Grendel's mother, seen as darkness, fear, and hostility, all that imprisons. What the Mere denies ethically (and thus frustrates) is heroic conduct, i.e., generosity and protection. This heroic conduct (eorlscipe) makes up the other half of a duality being explored. Metaphor is used to conjoin the elements of the duality, here in an especially forceful way, since the same metaphor is used for both halves of the duality: both Beowulf and the Mere have a powerful grip (1534a; 1516a).

Just in time (Da, 1512b), Beowulf is taken down to what the poem describes as a hall where he is out of the water's reach. Whitelock calls our attention to this similarity between the Mere and Heorot:

Writers on Beowulf may refer to a cave as the scene

55 Miracles: A Preliminary Study (1947; rpt. London: Fontana, 1960), pp. 81-82. See, too, Goldsmith, p. 116.

of Beowulf's second encounter, but the poet never does. He calls it a hof, a niðsele, a hrofsele, a reced, a hus, all terms that apply to a building, rather than a natural cave. It is free from water, because it is a roofed-hall. 56

Such a connection points to a similar social structure of lord and retainers. And, indeed, condemned and outcast as Cain's kin, Grendel, wonsæli wer (105a), shares in Satan's abrogation of his thaneship to God⁵⁷ and is ipso facto a member of Satan's retinue. There is, then, this additional meaning in the poem's calling Grendel a healðegn (142a), for Grendel behaves like a vengefulthane in an enemy's hall. Consequently, he cannot enjoy the joys of the gifstol (168a) in Heorot; but nor does he need to, for his side has taken over the occupation of Heorot, the Danish hall is in the hands of God's enemies.

But the Grendels' hall also serves to emphasise the purpose of Beowulf's mission. He is unavoidably reminded of the protection, companionship, warmth, light, and joy a hall offers, such as the recent celebrations in Heorot. He is reminded, too, no doubt, of the loss of those joys through Hrothgar's sorrow over the death of noble Aeschere, his dearest thane; of how Grendel's mother must have grabbed Aeschere as she did him in the water; and of how Hrothgar's thane must have been a warrior in need of protection just as he himself is one (1525a). The utter darkness and the lurking danger of the Mere's unknown depths, which the poem cleverly leaves to our imagination, underscores the violent horror of the place and the suffocating fear which encompasses the Danes. Mackie emphasises its suggestiveness:

⁵⁶ Dorothy Whitelock, The Audience of 'Beowulf' (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1951), p. 67.

⁵⁷ See Genesis 322a-27a.

The poet of Beowulf . . . cares little about verisimilitude, and does not greatly trouble to be consistent; his purpose is not to make the supernatural appear natural, but to invest his narrative with an eerie atmosphere of strangeness and horror. 58

In their own way, in fact, the inhabitants of Heorot have surrendered to the Mere's evil inasmuch as they have allowed it to pull them down further and further away from their heroic ideals, which it has devoured, just as its waters swallow Beowulf (1494b-95a); as the sea-monsters disable Beowulf from wielding his weapons (1508a-09a), so the Mere has robbed the Danes of physical defence. And just as the færgripe flodes tries to imprison Beowulf, so the Mere, stronger than thirty men, has paralysed all Danish thoughts of vengeance and of their own ethical good.

In this sense, the Mere imprisons and besieges Heorot. Beowulf's descent into the Mere could therefore be understood anagogically to mean he is going to free the souls of good men. But this would not only falsify the facts of the story but betray the tone of the poem. Predictably, Lee's associative approach yields an archetypal excursus on Beowulf's 'harrowing' of the Mere which ignores the admitted ('obvious') differences between Christ and Beowulf.⁵⁹ For one thing, Beowulf's primary motives are protection and revenge--as Grendel's mother's were--and not liberation or redemption. For another, and equally conclusive, not all the men in Heorot are 'good,' i.e.,

⁵⁸ W. S. Mackie, 'The Demons' Home in Beowulf,' JEGP, 37, No. 4 (1938), 456.

⁵⁹ The Guest-Hall of Eden, pp. 207-11. Perhaps this is pardonable. No less a critic than Kemp Malone himself has confessed, in his rev. of Goldsmith's The Mode and Meaning of 'Beowulf': 'I agree with her when she criticizes "some critics" (p. 72) for "treating Beowulf as figura or "type" of Christ like Noah or Isaac.' More than once I have come close to holding this heretical view but now I know better' (Speculum, 46, No. 2 1971, 370).

redeemable. These are important facts which do not allow for Beowulf's mission to be taken as Christ's descent into hell, though it is obvious that the Mere-Fight is at least meant to suggest it, for the physical features of the place set the stage unmistakably. In this way, the poem constructs, rather, an antitype that points up the disparity between the spiritual strengths of Christ and Beowulf.

In one of Gregory's accounts of Christ in the underworld, apropos Job 38.16 ('Numquid ingressus es profunda maris? Et in novissimis abyssi deambulasti?'), he says: 'In novissimis ergo abyssi Domino deambulare est in loco damnationis nihil suae retentionis invenire.'⁶⁰ Alongside this picture Beowulf's desperate predicament (1543a-47a) graphically shows up his naturally sinful human nature. But more important, Christ's descent also creates the opportunity for the Lord to demonstrate divinitatis potentiam 'the power of His Godhead' (Gregory, loc. cit.) in freeing men from the fetters of their sins and in saving them from the eternal, spiritual hell. What Beowulf's victory in the giants' lair means in point of fact is that he has helped to defeat Satan on yet another spiritual front, this time in the world of physical reality. Through Beowulf's heroic faith, God has been able to reclaim another part of His Creation.

Beowulf's grip, the other half of the metaphoric duality, is the thematic focus of the passage:

strengre getruwode,
mundgripe mægenes. Swa sceal man don,
þonne he æt guðe gegan þenceð
longsumne lof (1533b-36a)

For the first time in the poem, three dire needs are presented at

⁶⁰ 'For the Lord then to walk in the lowest parts of the abyss is for Him to find nothing to detain Him in the place of damnation.' Moralium Libri, Bk 29.12.24, PL 76.490A; trans. Bliss, III, 318, emphasis mine.

once: the Geats and Danes, sitting on the hillside above the Mere and watching the water, have a national need; Hrothgar's need is that of a king; and Beowulf is a thane in need. All three depend on the strength of Beowulf's mundgripe, both denotations of mund--'hand' and 'protection'--operating forcefully here. Beowulf himself trusts unreservedly in his own physical strength, and his past manual achievements inspire confidence in those waiting above.

The semantic and lexical proximity of mund activates the ambiguity of lof. As already pointed out in the discussion of lofædum (see above, p. 286), either 'praise' or 'protection' or both may be meant. In this context, the second meaning seems to predominate. Beowulf has promised Hrothgar (1392a) that he will effect a 'longlasting protection' of the Danish people who have suffered interminably (134a, 192a; cf. 1395a-96b). Moreover, Beowulf's need offers an opportunity for God's favour to protect him. There are two strong indications of God's protecting grace: the one in the presence of the 'fiery light' (Mackie, p. 461), which Beowulf sees blacne leoman beorhte scinan (1516b-17b) immediately after he realises he is safe from the predatory forces of the Mere's water; the other immediately after he has cut down Grendel's mother with the sword 'blessed with victory' (sigeeadig, 1557b), when 'Lixte se leoma, leoht inne stod' (1570). And then, as if to make sure that the audience does not miss the implication of the radiance already reflected in 'Leoht eastan com,/ beorht beacen Godes' (569b-70a), the poem adds 'efne swa of hefene hadre scineð/ rodores candel' (1571a-72a).⁶¹

The grotesque or supernatural features of the Mere have led a number of scholars into controversial speculation about whether it

⁶¹ Cf. 1657b-58b, 1661a-64b.

is a fresh-water lake or an inland sea. Against Lawrence's waterfall theory,⁶² Mackie argues convincingly, I think, when he calls the Mere 'a large land-locked arm of the sea' (p. 458); and Malone concurs by locating the giants' lair in 'a body of water represented as part of the ocean' (p. 305). But is with Goldsmith's view that mine consists most. Seeking to give the impression of the sea in order to realise fully the marine figuration in his poem, the Beowulf-poet describes an inland lake in terms of the sea, incorporating Biblical creatures and archetypes: 'Perhaps all the elements could be conceived as belonging to some vast loch on which fishing-boats ply (hence seglad 1429), surrounded by marshy ground with occasional outcrops of rock' (Goldsmith, pp. 137-38).

If the Grendel kin are prisoners, in that their home is surrounded by land, then the Danes in turn would appear to be imprisoned by the Mere and all that it represents. In terms of patristic values, it is said of deep spiritual poverty--of the kind the Danes suffer though living 'prosperously' (eadiglice, 100a)--

Non immerito aquae tunc illa inopia comparatur,
quia in inferno cruciat, qui susceptos in profundis
absorbens, solet lacus nomine designari. Unde
per prophetam quoque humani generis voce dicitur:

⁶² W. W. Lawrence, 'The Haunted Mere in Beowulf,' PMLA, 27, No. 2 (1912), 208-45. See his reply to Mackie in 'Grendel's Lair,' JEGP, 38, No. 4 (1939), 477-80. More recently, Larry D. Benson, in his essay 'The Originality of Beowulf,' in The Interpretation of Narrative: Theory and Practice, ed. Morton W. Bloomfield, Harvard English Studies, No. 1 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1970), has reiterated part of Mackie's argument, affirming that Grendel's Mere is 'more obviously a combination of the details of open sea and inland lake than the confused account of a waterfall' (p. 22). Yet, in the end, as Stanley's survey quite convincingly shows, the Anglo-Saxon audience 'understood that what was expressed as a figure was not necessarily capable of factual interpretation too' ('Old English Poetic Diction and the Interpretation of The Wanderer, The Seafarer, and The Penitent's Prayer,' Anglia, 73, No. 4, 1955, 413-66, rpt. in Essential Articles for the Study of Old English Poetry, ed. Jess B. Bessinger, Jr, and Stanley J. Kahrl, Hamden, Conn.: Archon, 1968, p. 484). The interests of verisimilitude cannot defeat the aims of poetry, in which our senses, emotions, and values become indivisibly fused.

Lapsa est in lacum vita mea . . . Ereptorum vero exultatione cantatur: Domine Deus meus, clamavi ad te, et sanasti me; Domine, abstraxisti ab inferis animam meam, salvasti me a descendentibus in lacum. 63

However, Beowulf tells the Danes, long before his encounter with Grendel, that God has set limits (weallas, 572a) to the cataclysmic aggression of the sea's waves:

Terminis suis Dominus mare circumdat, quia iras persequentium, iudiciorum suorum dispensatione modificat, ut insani tumida unda fervoris plano frangatur littore occultae dispensationis. 64

But the waves are also prisoners in the sense that they rebel against God's natural laws. Similarly, the Danes themselves are in a kind of bondage through their lack of faith in the God who controls everything. The Danes lack the spiritual insight to see that they are free of the Mere's influence as long as they live according to the spiritual laws of the Creator, se geweald hafað/ sæla ond mæla (1610b-11a). In effect, Beowulf now shows the Danes, after he has slain Grendel's mother, that, not they, but the Grendel kin are the true

63 That [need] is then not unsuitably likened to water, because there is that tormenting in hell, which, as swallowing up those it receives in the depths below, is used to be denoted by the title of a 'lake.' Whence it is delivered by the Prophet in the voice of mankind, My life is fallen into the lake. But by the triumphing of those that are escaped it is sung, O Lord my God, I cried unto Thee and Thou hast healed me. O Lord, Thou hast brought up my soul from the grave: Thou hast kept me from them that go down into the lake.

Gregory, Moralium Libri, Bk 18.19.30, PL 76.53C-D; trans. Bliss, II, 338.

64 The Lord surrounds the sea with His boundaries, because He so restricts the wrath of persecutors by the dispensation of His judgments, that the swelling wave of their mad wrath is broken on the level shore of His secret dispensation.

Ibid., Bk 28.17.37, PL 76.47OB; trans. Bliss, III, 292.
Cf. Proverbs 8.29.

prisoners in middangeard;⁶⁵ and that insofar as God controls all three seas--of humanity, of time, and of evil--the Mere itself is also imprisoned and its evil contained. In Beowulf himself as the righteous sea in battle with the iniquitous waters of the Mere (wigge under wætere, 1656a), the wide, open, free-ranging ocean is seen to be victorious over the confined lagoon. Beowulf 'cleanses' the Mere by pouring new water into it; he 'flows' into Denmark, bringing the Geatish spirit of freedom to wash away the idolatrous fear of the Danes. This is the poem's anthropomorphism of the sea, and Beowulf is Garsecg. Finally, Beowulf shows the Danes that, while the Mere may assail the inhabitants of Heorot as hell assails middangeard, God protects those who bravely put their faith in His gifts when they fight the visible enemies of heaven, leaving Him to deal with the invisible ones. Indeed, the true thematic significance of the Mere-Fight itself lies in its structural relation to the Gold-Fight with its dragon and its curse. But this point must wait until we have seen Beowulf home and honoured.

⁶⁵ Beowulf speaks of the Grendel kin's being trapped when later he tells Hygelac:

'ic ðæt eall gewræc,
swa begylpan ne þearf Grendeles maga
ænig ofer eorðan uhthlem þone,
se ðe lengest leofað laðan cynnes,
f[lode] bifongen.' (2005b-09a)

The square brackets contain my tentative proposal. While 'Only f partly visible in MS.' is Wrenn-Bolton's footnote (p. 171), Chambers, in his revision of Wyatt's ed., p. 99, rejects, on the basis of the Thorkelin transcripts fæ (A) and fer (B), a post-initial l, such as appears in flesce, actually suggested by both Trautmann and Holthausen, e.g., 2424b. But cf. 2274a, 2595a, as well as Andreas 1057b, Christ 306a, 1168b, Guthlac 994a, and The Whale 18b.

(v)

The Geatish Voyage Home

The narrative context of this passage is made up, on the one side, by Hrothgar's hortatory speech to Beowulf and their reciprocal valedictions and, on the other side, by Beowulf's report to Hygelac and the presentation of the Danish gifts. Now, developing through all of this is another aspect of the theme of protection. In Beowulf's first words to Hrothgar, spoken over the grisly head of Grendel, the poem introduces the need of friends: "'oftost wisode [ylde Waldend]/ winigea leasum"' (1663b[-61b]-64a). Hrothgar calls Beowulf wine min (1704b) and vows to 'treasure' (gelæstan, 1706b)⁶⁶ his friendship (freode, 1707a). Next day, announcing the Geats' departure, Beowulf promises that if ever again Hrothgar should have a manna bearf (1835b; cf. 201b), he will bring a force of a thousand thanes (1829a-30a) in order to be sure of winning from Hrothgar modlufan maran (1823). What is more, Hrothgar's heir will be well received at the Geatish court should he ever visit there: "'he mæg þær fela/ freonda findan"' (1837b-38a). The whole tone of the farewell scene is one of reconciliation and bright prospects--no wonder there is joy in heaven at the raven's change of heart (1801a-02a), for Beowulf the Sea-Geat went to the aid of an enemy king. Hrothgar acknowledges him as the peace-maker between their two nations:

'Hafast þu gefered þæt þam folcum sceal,
Geata leodum ond Gar-Denum,
sib gemæne ond sacu restan,
inwitniþas, þe hie ær drugon,
wesam, þenden ic wealde widan rices,

⁶⁶ I intend the double meaning 'to preserve' and 'to repay lavishly.' See BTD, s.v. gelæstan.

maþmas gemæne, manig operne
 godum gegrettan ofer ganotes bæð;
 sceal hringnaca ofer heafu bringan
 lac ond luftacen. Ic þa leode wat
 ge wið feond ge wið freond fæste geworhte,
 æghwæs untæle ealde wisan.
 (1855a-65b)

In conjunction with Hrothgar's joy, the delighted gannet is, in this context, an objective equivalent of the first order, its emotive appropriateness anticipating and thus establishing the jubilant imagery of the sea passage that follows.

But here there is also an underlying irony at work: benden ic wealde exposes the tonal tension initiated, and metrically endorsed, in the collocation hrefn blaca (1801a) and heofones wyne (1801b) referred to above. The sinister suggestion is undeniably present that the departure of the Geats will serve merely to arouse the enemies of the Danes. Again, when Beowulf gratefully returns Hrunting to Unferth, there is an ominous oxymoron in the word he chooses, 'he bone guðwine godne tealde' (1810), which, coming immediately after the news that the Geats are eager to return home, concentrates the thematic tension.⁶⁷ Beowulf certainly seems to be thinking along these lines when he later tells Hygelac that he does not regard the Heathobards' dryhtsibbe dæl Denum unfæcne, / freondscipe fæstne (2068a-69a). But perhaps Hrothgar himself makes the most significant remark when he recalls how he used to presume all the world to be his friends--'"ic me ænigne/ under swegles begong gesacan ne tealde"' (1772b-73b)--until he was made to realise that there are fleshly (including human) enemies of God living unsuspected on earth. This,

⁶⁷ 'The dominant [as opposed to the commonplace (e.g., Brodeur, *The Art of Beowulf*, pp. 228, 235)] constructive principle of much Old English poetry is one of contrast punctuated at key moments by the contrastive collocation of thematically important words, phrases, or ideas,' Jerome Mandel, 'Contrast in Old English Poetry,' *The Chaucer Review*, 6, No. 1 (1971), 12.

then, is the antithesis of the sub-theme of friendship. In the meantime, Beowulf carries back to Geatland the friendship of the Danes which is based on the promise of protection, and Hygelac's indifference (1996a-97a) changes, one feels, after he has heard Beowulf's story and seen the Danish gifts, though the poem is not explicit on this point. As for Beowulf himself, he has no doubt that his king will be an ally to the Danes (1830b-35b). And the main point of the valedictory scenes is that the Geats will support the Danes against any external hostility. It is the invisible malice inside the Danish court that will thwart Geatish protection for all its courage, faith, and magnanimity.

Turning to the sea passage itself (1888a-1924b), we are at once reminded of the outward voyage to Denmark. Then, the ship travelled lightly with the speed of a bird, skimming the water's surface; now, the ship has to 'cut' (drefan, 1904a) its way through a contrary sea whose waves and currents put the iron-joinings to the test. The reason for this is clear: Hrothgar's mapmas twelfe (1867b) weigh so heavily in the ship that it lies low in the water, its planks 'creaking' (punede, 1906b) as it moves slowly under sail into the 'marauding' wind.⁶⁸ On the other side of the ocean, in Geatland, the sea is by now so vexed (drefan) by the ship that it tries to drive it, magnificent with its cargo of peace and prosperity, to its 'destruction' (forwrecan, 1919b).

In Denmark, then, Beowulf leaves behind King Hrothgar whom the

⁶⁸ I think it untenable to force a favourable litotes out of 'no þær wegflotan wind ofer yðum/ sides getwæfde' (1907a-08a), in view of the subsequent lyftgeswenced (1913a) 'harassed by the wind' ('gasping'?). In my 'marauding,' I have tried to combine the ideas contained in getwæfde and -geswenced, and the resonance of the fricatives in the passage seems to reinforce this impression of effort and exertion.

sea of mortality will soon bear away, as the 'shipped' treachery in Heorot pulls the Danes down deeper into ethical anarchy, until the multitudinous power of the satanic waves overwhelms them again. The metaphor presages Heorot, formerly sinking under the rich weight of Danish worldliness, and then temporarily brought to safety by Beowulf, now slipping backwards to its ultimate ruin. From another point of view, the marine imagery also presents Beowulf's arrival in Geatland as majestic and stately, his ship 'hladen here-wædum, hringedstefna/ mearum ond maðmum' (1897a-98a). His kingly power is again highlighted (see above, p. 328), and especially so in the context of Hrothgar's homily, for the royal treasures which Beowulf brings back to Geatland are such that he undoubtedly shall "to frofre weorþan/ eal langtwidig leodum [s]inum/ hæleðum to helpe" (1707b-09a), and his diplomacy is such that, should the Geatish king die during Beowulf's lifetime, "Sæ-Geatas selran næbben/ to geceosenne cyning ænigne,/ hordweard hælepa" (1850a-52a).

The topics of Hrothgar's homily are provision and protection as the fruits of kingly power. He first illustrates these with the story of Heremod who, a powerful king in his youth, became a national bane (1712), who, as we have already been told, could no longer be relied upon 'folc gehealdan,/ hord ond hleoburh, hælepa rice,/ eðel Scyldinga' (911b-13a), and whose only treasures were bloody ones (1719). In short, Heremod represents the ultimate perversion of cynedom: he who should naturally want to protect his people turns on them; he who should naturally provide for his people withholds and even takes from them. In the second lesson, Hrothgar puts to Beowulf the example, albeit fantastic, of a king who rules the whole world with power and plenty yet 'cannot protect himself' (him

bebeorgan ne con, 1746b). Nor is it simply a case of the man who gains the world loses his soul. The 'wickedness' (bealonið, 1758a) against which Hrothgar warns Beowulf is that of losing sight of the value of God's precious gift, i.e., the soul; of becoming so used to not being fearful of one's bodily safety that one no longer feels fear for one's soul; and, in the end, of not fearing 'hine seþe mæg ge lichoma 7 saule for-doan'.⁶⁹ The soul's protection (sawele hyrde, 1742a) lies, of course, in humility, the only true wisdom, the spiritual insight which realises that God is also the protector of souls (gæsta hleo, Juliana, ASPR, III, 49a). Finally, the moral of Hrothgar's speech is that there is no such thing as royal autarky, and the truly powerful, wise, and good king is he who knows that he is dependent on God for both material and spiritual wealth, that 'provision and protection--He has control over all' (eard ond eorlscipe --he ah ealra geweald, 1727⁷⁰), and that the dryhten of men is also the thane of the Dryhten who offers 'everlasting protection' (ece rædas, 1760a).⁷¹ Eternal life is the gift of God and not a prerogative of man. The proper attitude therefore is one of humility.

At the Geatish court, Beowulf puts Hrothgar's lessons into practice: he pays homage to Hygelac by giving away 'all that his strength has won' (mægnes mede, 2146a) with the words: "'Gen is eall

⁶⁹ The Gospel according to Saint Matthew and according to Saint Mark, ed. Walter W. Skeat (1887 and 1871; facsim. rpt. 2 vols in 1, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1970), 'The Gospel according to Saint Matthew,' Ch. 10.28, p. 87, Rushworth gloss. Cf. gastbona (177a).

⁷⁰ I have replaced Wrenn-Bolton's semi-colon with a dash and construed eorlscipe as a plural form. See E. E. Wardale, An Old English Grammar (London: Methuen, 1922), pp. 70-71, par. 95, n. 1.

⁷¹ BTD, s.v. ræd, III, 'course of action that results from deliberation,' 'decree'; IV, 'benefit.' HMD, s.v. ræd, I, 'help,' 'power.'

æt ðe/ lissa gelong"' (2149b-50a), acknowledging his thaneship to his king. Beowulf returns a victor, driving over the sea's surface, striding over the beach with his men, making straight for his king. Interestingly, in its form, Beowulf's arrival is almost like the triumphal processions which the Romans celebrated and in which they saw intimations of divine blessing. The incarnation of a Roman victory, a triumphant general would pass along the crowded streets with the prizes of his recent battles in tandem--slaves, treasures, battle-standards, and so on--heading towards the Temple of Jupiter Capitolinus, where he would make sacrifice to the Father of the Gods.⁷² Though totally extraneous to the poem, this analogy of apotheosis gains some pertinence when King Hygelac, as eorla hleo (2190a), grants Beowulf land and noble rank in return (2192b-99b). Especially effective, too, is the contrastive sketch of Modthryth in which the mean and capriciously froward queen, dangerous to look upon, is transformed by the wise King Offa: after her voyage ofer fealone flod (1950a) she becomes famous for her munificence. Similarly, Beowulf, formerly despised and seldom honoured, returns to Geatland from across the sea to perform kingly acts of generosity, and, though his reputation for being a feeble warrior had long ago been disproved, only now does he have the heroic stature and status to offer the Geats a king's protection should they need it. Thus, the series of changes--in Dano-Geatish relations, in Hrothgar's peace (1774a-81b), in the portrayal of Unferth, in the Geats' ship, and more especially in

⁷² Robert Payne, The Roman Triumph (London: Pan, 1964), pp. 10-12. Though the conqueror was given no homiletic deflation, he nevertheless was reminded of his humanity by a slave who stood behind him in his laurelled chariot and whispered into his ear such words of humility as 'Remember that you are a mortal' or 'Look behind!' meaning: 'Look to the aftermath--look to all the years that remain. Do not be puffed up or elated at your present good-fortune' (pp. 45, 77).

Modthryth's character and in Beowulf's fortunes ('Edwenden cwom/
tiredigum menn torna gebwylces,' 2188b-89b)--announces and amplifies
the shift in focus and direction of the theme of protection which
culminates in Beowulf's kingship and death.

(vi)

The scene of Beowulf's death is near a barrow a thousand years
old (2243a, 3050), overlooking the sea from a headland on the Geatish
coast. Inside the barrow are golden treasures uncountable; outside
are three figures: Beowulf, mortally wounded, sitting against the
wall of the barrow; Wiglaf, bathing his king's wounds with water;
and the variegated Dragon, lying dead. The battle is over. Suddenly,
Wiglaf gets up and hurries into the barrow. The two enemies, Beowulf
and the Dragon, are alone again. The sea surges in the background,
and the haunting murmur of its eternal ebb and flow suggests a signi-
ficance far beyond the narrative action of the poem itself.

The Beowulf-poet has carefully created this moment. Throughout,
the poem depicts the Dragon, protector of the gold, as a warrior:
for instance, Beowulf, he who has been through many wars, has to seek
battle against a dragon (guðfloga, 2528a) who is a guðfreca (2414a)
hat ond heaðogrim (2691a), who has a heorte gefysed/ sæcce to seceanne
(2561b-62a), and who wields heaðufyr (2522a) and hat hildeswat (2558a).
It is an extraordinary encounter: the headland becomes a battlefield
holmwylme neh,/ yðgewinne (2411b-12a), and the confluence of the des-
tructive forces embodied in the two combatants takes place within a
context of feud and enmity. The poem recalls two of Beowulf's great-
est exploits, the one in Denmark and the other in Frisia where
Hygelac fell. After the first, Beowulf returned victorious to his

people; after the second,

Oferswam ða sioleða bigong sunu Ecgðeowes,
 earm anhaga eft to leodum
 (2367a-68b)

That is to say, the poem picks out of Beowulf's youth two high points: his mastery of demons as well as of the daemonic sea. But Beowulf's accession to the Geatish throne is the true summit of his career:

Swa he niða gehwane genesen hæfde,
 sliðra geslyhta, sunu Ecgðiowes,
 ellenweorca, oð ðone anne dæg,
 þe he wið þam wyrme gewegan sceolde.
 (2397a-400b)

As king of the Geats, Beowulf is the one responsible for their protection, and so, when he learns that the Dragon has destroyed their gifestol (2327a), he is greatly distressed; indeed, he believes he has sinned against God, because the royal throne represents not only the nation's source of provision and protection, but also, and more important, 'the cosmic point through which is mediated divine help from above.'⁷³

At this point it will be well to take a glance at Anglo-Saxon society itself in order to strengthen the poem's governing theme still more with cultural significance. When I say that the central concern of Beowulf is 'the right use of kingly power and wealth' (Goldsmith, p. 3), I mean to imply two basic things: one, that the poet subscribes to a political ideal and, two, that a king's power is per se a moral good. The Germanic political ideal consists in a tripartite reciprocity of dependence, i.e., a king's people (folc) look to their king for provision and protection (71a-73b), much as his thanes (ðegnas) do, while the king himself relies upon his thanes to carry

⁷³ William A. Chaney, The Cult of Kingship in Anglo-Saxon England: The Transition from Paganism to Christianity (Manchester: Manchester Univ. Press, 1970), p. 55.

out that popular protection. The people also provide the king with revenue, though most of it comes perhaps from the plundering raids which he undertakes with his thanes, to whom he is very generous for their loyal service. In this way, a king's generosity can determine his power and influence. The concept of protection is integral to the Germanic political ethos. While the folc depend on the king's mund, he "'se þe soð ond riht/ fremed on folce"' (1700b-01a), depends in turn on his ðegnas to maintain the security of the state (frið) as well as the temporary asylum (grið) he chooses to give anyone.⁷⁴

But if a king's comitatus is the one source of his power, God is another, since, just as 'the heathen king, the representative of the gods among the folk, was responsible for the tribe's right relationship with the divine, so his Christian successor continues the same function in later terms' (Chaney, p. 186). Even from the time of the earliest Anglo-Saxon laws, the king's person and his hall are sacred (pp. 205ff.), so that the king's palace is the focal point of society, being the inviolable heart of generosity, power, and protection. In fact, the royal hall probably came to look like a church (pp. 73-76), and, taking C. S. Lewis's point (see above, pp. 329-330), it is only because the Anglo-Saxons themselves regard the king's throne (gifstol) and residence as material objects having spiritual significance that they attribute to God a throne and a hall, calling Him by such titles as Heofoncýning, dryhtfolca Helm, and sawla Symbelgifa (Chaney, pp. 46-48; beorna hleo, Juliana, ASPR, III, 272a). Hence, an offence against a church or the clergy is an offence against

⁷⁴ Actually, both mund and grið describe the special royal protection belonging to churches and private houses, and to the palace and its precincts. Mund is the earlier term, being replaced by grið during the Danish invasions (BTD, s.v. grið). See Chaney, pp. 214-15.

the king himself. Similarly, violation of the king's sanctuary is a crime against God. And in both cases, compensation (bot) must be paid. To sum up: the right use of kingly power consists in being generous, maintaining the peace, and providing protection for folc and ðegnas, which includes preserving the sanctity of the Church:

Elc cyrice is mid rihte on Cristes aganan gryðe;
 7 ælc Crysten man ah mycele þearfe, þæt he on þam
 gryðe mycele mæðe wite; forðam Godes gryð is ealra
 griða selast to gearnianne 7 geornmost to heald-
 enne, 7 þær nyhst cyninges. 75

There is of course no Christian church explicitly mentioned in Beowulf, but the royal palace of the Geats has been violated, their king has failed to preserve its sanctity. The gifestol Geata is no longer the leoda fæsten (2333b):

When the king becomes the lord, patron, and mund-
borh of his whole people, they pass from the ancient
 national peace of which he is the guardian into the
 closer personal or territorial relation of which he
 is the source. The peace is now the king's peace;
 . . . the frith is enforced by the national officers,
 the grith by the king's personal servants: the one
 is official, the other personal; the one the business
 of the country, the other that of the court.

(BTD, s.v. grið)

This seems to be the ealde riht (2330a) against which Beowulf fears he has offended,⁷⁶ and he grieves, as Hrothgar did, that he may not

⁷⁵ Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen, ed. F. Liebermann (1903-16; facsim. rpt. Aalen: Scientia, 1960), I, 280, A.

⁷⁶ Scholars and critics tend to view the phrase ofer ealde riht either as a Christian allusion to Mosaic law (Klaeber, p. 211; Wrenn, 2nd ed., p. 220) or as a reference to pre-Mosaic natural law 'which was implanted even in the hearts of pagans' (Morton W. Bloomfield, 'Patristics and Old English Literature: Notes on Some Poems,' Comparative Literature, 14, Winter 1962, 36-37, 39-41, rpt. in Studies in Old English Literature in Honor of Arthur G. Brodeur, ed. Stanley B. Greenfield, p. 40; Wrenn-Bolton, p. 183). Most would now agree with Charles Donahue that 'The contents of the ancient law, in so far as they can be deduced from the poem, seem to be the traditional precepts of Germanic morality' (Quoted by Bloomfield, p. 39, from Donahue's 'Beowulf, Ireland and the Natural Good,' Traditio, 7, 1949-51, 275).

be able to fulfil his role as 'national protector' (folces weard, 2513a). So he insists on taking on the Dragon alone, prepared to lay down his own life in order to get compensation and put things right (2532b-37b).

It is only at this point in the poem, when Beowulf, unaided, fights the Dragon, that the structural reason emerges for the selection of the last day of the protagonist's life to work out the poem's governing theme. For, in the Gold-Fight, we see the tenor of which the metaphoric vehicle is the Mere-Fight. The iconicity of Beowulf's fight with Grendel's mother extends the significance of his fight with the Dragon and gives it its thematic valency. In both there are three needs vital to the social order and hence to the meaning of Germanic life: the need of the people for kingly protection; the king's dependence on his comitatus; and a thane's need of his lord's protection. If any one of these is denied or frustrated, disorder soon results, and disorder is lawlessness, and lawlessness is sin.

The Geats look to their king for protection from the Dragon's unremitting devastation (2314b-19a); that is, King Beowulf is faced with a 'national crisis' (leoda bearfe, 2801a). As in the Mere-Fight, the afflicted folc are roughly represented by the troop that accompanies Beowulf to the scene of battle. Here, representing their fellow-Geats, Wiglaf and the rest of the royal bodyguard watch anxiously. But I say 'roughly represented' because it turns out that the ignominious ten can see only the surging waves of the deadly fire and have no faith in their lord's might. Instead, they turn away into the cover of the forest. But it is also into the darkness of fear and shame that they retreat (like the Danes), to live in the darkness of alienation (like the sons of Cain, 87b):

'Nu sceal sincþego ond swyrdgifu,
 eall eðelwyn eowrum cynne,
 lufen alicgean; londrihtes mot
 þære mægburge monna æghwylc
 idel hweorfan' (2884a-88a)

It is only Wiglaf who is sufficiently sick at heart to be moved to action. He can see only his lord in need (æt þearfe . . . beodcyninges, 2694), and so he dives through the smoke and into the fray.

The motive for Wiglaf's actions, the poem tells us, is twofold:

fraternal ('In but one of them a heart swelled with sorrow: nothing can ever turn away the claims of kinship in the man who is set on good,' 2599b-601b) and ethical ('So ought a warrior to be, at hand in a crisis.' 2708b-09a). The latter motive is self-explanatory.

Like the breast-shirt that protects Beowulf in the Mere-Fight, Wiglaf is a true shoulder-companion determined to protect his lord's life from an enemy's attack, and a thane whose loyalty has been woven by his lord's own hand in the generous dispensing of gifts (2633a-40b). Moreover, it is ethically deplorable to leave the field of battle (2653a-56a). The tie of kinship, on the other hand, needs a little examination within the special context of the poem itself.

To begin with, Beowulf and Wiglaf are the last of the Waegmundings. I hope I have shown above enough of the Beowulf-poet's verbal sensibility and flair for wordplay--in a single line as well as in a single word--to do justice to this thematically climactic cognomen. It appears only twice in the poem, in the genitive plural (2607b and 2814a), but significantly, because it supplies the hereditary link between Wiglaf and Beowulf that enables the dying king to pass on his role as protector to his loyal thane (2800b-01a). The word itself is tripartite, being made up of wæg, meaning (most probably) 'wave' or 'sea'; mund, meaning 'hand' and/or 'protection'; and ing,

the patronymic suffix meaning 'son of.'⁷⁷ The poet has gathered the analogies so far discussed into a single metaphor which sums up the metaphoric design and the essential meaning of Beowulf's life as the heroic sea. The word evokes almost every image we have analysed: the Geats travelling over the waves to render help to the Danes; Beowulf's youthful conquest of the hostile sea; his underwater victory over the Grendels and, before that, over other giants; and finally, bringing riches across the sea into Geatland. But it is through the twofold progress of the whole metaphor that the theme of protection is developed and its ultimate meaning understood. We hear that the Geats thank God for a safe and speedy voyage, that Hrothgar thanks God for their arrival, that God's light saved Beowulf from floundering among the waves, that He protected him in the Mere and used him against His enemies, and that He rewarded Beowulf and his people bountifully. This highly productive metaphor is in a sense present everywhere in the poem because its structure develops in conjunction with the poem's main thematic movement.

Moreover, it is in this deeper sense of the metaphor that the tie of kinship exhibits its spiritual significance which would be inevitably implicit for the Anglo-Saxon Christian audience. In his series of sermons on the First Letter of John, Augustine analyses the apparent contradiction between verses 1.8 ('Si dixerimus quoniam peccatum non habemus, ipsi nos seducimus, et veritas in nobis non est') and 3.9 ('Omnis qui natus est ex Deo, peccatum non facit'), concluding that the transgression of the new law of brotherly love is the one sin no child of God can commit. And so, 'Dilectio ergo sola discernit inter filios Dei et filios diaboli. . . . non discernuntur filii Dei

⁷⁷ HMD, p. 392, col. 2; s.v. -ing.

a filiis diaboli, nisi charitate.⁷⁸ The perfect act of love in human terms is, of course, for a man to lay down his life for his brothers, and so Augustine says to his congregation: 'dicat te quisquam paganum, tu factis ostende te christianum,'⁷⁹ and then ends his sermon by quoting verse 3.18: 'Filioli mei, non diligamus verbo neque lingua, sed opere et veritate.'

Wiglaf's love is unmistakably Christian; he is a son of God:

'God wat on mec,
 þæt me is micle leofre, þæt minne lichaman
 mid minne goldgyfan gled fæðmie.'
 (2650b-52b)

We notice, too, that Wiglaf speaks few words before he plunges into the fight, and that his first word to Beowulf is Leofa (2663a; cf. 3079b, 3108a). Like the appearance of the victory-blessed sword in the Mere-Fight, Wiglaf's entry into the Gold-Fight is an act of divine intervention in which Wiglaf becomes a þegn ungemete till (2721b), who fights with supernatural strength (2879a), and even though, strictly speaking, Wiglaf disobeys his lord's command to stay out of the fight (2529a-32b), the higher law of love justifies his action. He is the best of the king's thanes and trustier than any other because he is an instrument of God. The spiritual war between good and evil is thus reintroduced into the poem but with this difference, that the values precious to God and to men are fused in their co-operation in the Gold-Fight. Moreover, the significance of Beowulf's last boast to his bodyguard--

⁷⁸ 'Love alone, then, distinguishes the sons of God from the sons of the devil. . . . the sons of God are not distinguished from the sons of the devil, except by love.' In Epistolam Joannis ad Parthos, Trac. 5.7, PL 35.2016; translation mine.

⁷⁹ 'let him call you pagan who will, you show that you are Christ's by what you do.' Ibid., Trac. 5.12, PL 35.2018; translation mine.

'Ic mid elne sceall
gold gegangan, oððe guð nimeð,
feorhbealu frecne, frean eowerne!'
(2535b-37b)

--is appreciated best when it is seen in relation to the poem's comment on Beowulf's heroic faith, i.e., faith in God's gift (cf. 2540b), in the Mere-Fight:

Swa sceal man don,
þonne he æt guðe gegan þenceð
longsumne lof; na ymb his lif cearað.
(1534b-36b)

Here, too, we get the fusion of the pagan Germanic and the Christian, human and divine, ideals: the laying down of one's life for the sake of dear ones. In the thread of Beowulf's destiny the poem spins together the secular heroic ideals of revenge and feuding and the Christian ideals of reconciliation and brotherly love. No Christian audience would have any difficulty in identifying either Wiglaf or Beowulf as a son of their God.

Now, Beowulf has a dual role in the Mere-Fight: he is at the same time the chieftain of the loyal Geats and the servant of King Hrothgar. The 'protection' (lof) that he seeks to achieve is both for his own followers and for his foster-lord. In other words, Beowulf is both lord and thane in the Mere-Fight. Similarly, in the Gold-Fight, he does battle in the dual role of national lord and righteous thane; on one level Beowulf is Wiglaf's king needing his protection, on another level Beowulf is God's thane needing divine protection; in short, he dies for Geat and for God. Thus, the thematic principle established so far in the poem continues: a need is met by heroic faith which, put into action, receives divine protection. The suffering of the Geatish people brings Beowulf to face the Dragon alone, with the consequent intervention by God through the person of Wiglaf. The purpose of that divine intervention will

now be made clear.

* * *

When Wiglaf emerges again from the barrow he is carrying a segn eallgylden (2767b) which gives off a leoma (2769b) that makes it beacna beorhtost (2777a). Beowulf knows the meaning of the bright light on which he now gazes, he has seen similar gleams before, first as a youth off the coast of Norway, and again as a thane in the Danish Mere. Here, in the Gold-Fight, the sea is still the evil force it was in the previous encounters, but it has undergone a metamorphosis: the sea has become the gæsta gifrost (1123a)--though the fire is real fire which burns, it has the likeness of water. The first thing Beowulf sees of the Dragon is his 'hostile vapour' (hildeswat, 2558a), a 'current' (stream, 2545b) bursting from the barrow, and the 'torrent of that stream' (bære burnan wælm, 2546b) hot with killing flames. When the Dragon charges into his second attack, Beowulf's shield is burnt to the rim by the fire advancing in 'waves' (lig ybum for, 2672b).

Yet since Beowulf is mortally wounded in this battle, it would seem that his heroic action has not been favoured by God, that his life has received no divine protection. Not so. The stake in this battle is not Beowulf's body's life but his soul's life. Beowulf is old and knows himself that his body must soon perish, that it is, to transfer the epithet, wælfus (2420a). Beowulf comes to this realisation as he sits on the headland overlooking the sea. He recalls the metaphor in Hrothgar's advice that, in the end, it is only God who can protect the 'soul's treasure' (sawle hord, 2422a; cf. 1724ff.), and the dramatic irony of Hrothgar's chiasmic prophecy, that Beowulf's body will

fall prey to oððe fyres feng oððe flodes wylm (1764), is here in the making. But the poem makes it clear that when Beowulf's body dies, his soul lives on (2819b-20a). While the symbol of a radiant light still indicates divine intervention, and glorifies heroic action in times of need, God's protection is now directed against the invisible spiritual forces of evil.

As the quotation from C. S. Lewis has indicated, for the ancient mind, the material implies the spiritual and vice versa. The satanic evil manifested in the Mere is thus a visible reality; Grendel, his mother, and the water are neither material or spiritual but both. On the other hand, the satanic evil surrounding the gold is an invisible reality; the Dragon, the fire, and the curse are neither spiritual or material but both. Asleep for three centuries, the Dragon (atol inwitgæst, 2670a) is unseen; disguised as fire, the sea goes undetected; and the curse is as unsubstantial as words uttered a thousand years ago. The deepest meaning in the poem is now beginning to emerge:

Induite vos armaturam Dei, ut possitis stare adversus insidias diaboli: quoniam non est nobis colluctatio adversus carnem et sanguinem: sed adversus principes, et potestates, adversus mundi rectores tenebrarum harum, contra spiritualia nequitiae, in caelestibus.
(Ephesians 6.11-12)

Most probably, the fugitive slave did not know that the barrow was guarded (2226b-27b), so that the Dragon would have gone on sleeping had the hoard not been rifled; for a certainty, the Dragon had not troubled the Geats at all before the theft of the cup (2309b-11b; 2406a-09a). But, as Wiglaf succinctly puts it: "Hord ys gesceawod, / grimme gegongen" (3084b-85a); it is an invisible evil which has manifested itself in Beowulf's death. Only the poet and the audience know what that invisible satanic force is. In the clearest statement of the theme of protection in the poem, the poet says that the gold was

galdre bewunden,
 þæt ðam hringsele hrinan ne moste
 gumena ænig, nefne God sylfa,
 sigora Soðcýning, sealde þam ðe he wolde
 --he is manna gehyld-- hord openian,
 efne swa hwylcum manna, swa him gemet ðuhte.
 (3052b-57b)

Similar words are used to give credence to the slave's second escape from the hoard (2291a-93a), the obvious implication being that God protects the soul of every man, be he servant or king, though obviously a man can perform heroic deeds only to the degree that his natural gifts allow him. Because much has been given to a king, much is expected of him. Taken together with the last line quoted immediately above, the wording of the curse will be seen to apply not only to a king (as Stanley and Malone would like us to believe⁸⁰) but to any man: 'se secg . . . se ðone wong strude' (3071a, 3073b). All humanity is vulnerable to the gold's invisible evil, and only God can block its effect.

Yet we are told by Malone, on the one hand, that in the lines

næs he goldhwæte gearwor hæfde
 agendes est ær gesceawod.
 (3074a-75b)

'Agend as a kenning for God is dubious . . . here, where a hoard is the subject of discussion, "God" is a most unlikely (not to say impossible) meaning of the term'; and we are told by Stanley, on the other hand, that for the interpretation of agendes est as Godes est 'there is in this context no justification' (p. 144). But God is often seen as a possessor in Anglo-Saxon poetry; for instance, in such phrases as se Agend, wuldres Agend, lifes Agend, sigores Agend, and swegles Agend, as well as in 'Age mec se ælmihta god' (Resignation, ASPR, III, 1a). These examples, though not in this form, are

⁸⁰ E. G. Stanley, 'Hæthenra Hyht in Beowulf,' p. 146. Stanley cites Kemp Malone's 'Notes on Beowulf,' Anglia, 54 (1930), 1-7.

all mentioned by Stanley himself, who fails to realise that to acknowledge the truth of certain facts does not automatically disqualify their validity as evidence for the opposite view. Moreover, as Stanley is forced to admit, est 'comes most frequently in such phrases as Godes est, Metudes est' (loc. cit., emphasis mine). As to context, I think Stanley weakens his own argument when he tries to relate these two lines to ll. 2747a-51b (p. 146), especially when the passage containing the curse is bounded by two direct (and nearer) references to God's protection, namely, he is manna gehyld (3056a) and Waldendes were (3109). Following first Smithers (see Stanley, p. 144) and then Wyatt-Chambers (p. 152), my own translation of these two lines is: 'By no means had he previously seen more clearly the gold-abounding grace of the Lord.'

But this translation is not entirely satisfactory. For one thing, it suppresses God's role as Agend; for another, it does not exploit the ambiguity in goldhwate. I suggest that we try to include God's ownership by asking the question 'Of what?' to which the only answer in this context can be: 'Beowulf's soul.' We know that est can also mean 'kindness,' 'grace,' or 'favour' (BTD and HMD, s.v.) so goldhwate may refer either to the newly-won gold in the barrow or to the quality of the Soul-owner's love. Both are intended and are incorporated in the following interpretative paraphrases: 'Little did Beowulf realise that he had never witnessed a more generous act of God's protection, since not only were his people well provided for but his own soul had been acquitted by its rightful owner and thus saved from hell'; 'Beowulf never knew that the previous acts of divine protection, in his battles against the Grendels and against the sea, were nothing compared with this.' It is a finely poised moment of thematic irony. So it is that, when Beowulf's soul departs,

it goes to take its place in the assembly of the righteous (him of hræðre gewat/ sawol secean soðfæstra dom, 2819b-20b),⁸¹ since, in the words of Augustine:

nulla est hominis sapientia nisi pietas qua recte
colitur verus Deus, id expectans praemium in
societate sanctorum non solum hominum verum etiam
angelorum, ut sit Deus omnia in omnibus. 82

The belief of Stanley, Goldsmith, and others, that Beowulf's soul is doomed to hell is gainsaid by the cumulative emphasis of the poem. Carrigan, however, seems to me to be indubitably right when he argues that, in the context of 'Wiglaf's two comitatus speeches each of which emphasises Beowulf's generosity, it seems extraordinary that Beowulf, because he died for the gold, should be accused of avarice.'⁸³ I am reluctant indeed to accept that a Christian poet of such aristocratic intellect and spiritual insight would spend his time and genius (and the monastery's vellum) on a condemned heathen hero. There is no ambiguity in the phrase soðfæstra dom created deliberately by the poet 'unwilling to anticipate God's judgment' (Stanley, p. 143). Doubts about Beowulf's salvation come only when we fail to appreciate the poem's metaphoric procedure.

⁸¹ For dom 'assembly,' see BTS, s.v., IVa, and HMD, s.v.; for secean 'to go to' or 'to visit,' see, e.g., HMD, s.v. secan, and Klaeber, p. 395. As Bolton has reverted to the dubious MS reading hwæðre, I have borrowed hræðre from Wrenn's 2nd ed.

⁸² man's only wisdom is the religion that guides him rightly to worship the true God and awaits as its reward in the fellowship of saints, not only human but also angelic, this goal, "that God may be all in all."

The City of God, Bk 14.28, trans. Levine, pp. 406 and 407.

⁸³ 'Structure and Thematic Development in Beowulf,' p. 43. I may add that the accusation comes not from the poem but from the critics.

* * *

Though the death of Beowulf occurs some three hundred lines before the poem itself ends, his presence abides. As we have seen now more than once, the sea's figuration varies in the poem in order to fit a new thematic situation and so serve to express the situation more fully and to anticipate the next step in the development of the theme. The best example of this kind of adaptation comes in Beowulf's death-speech, in which the poem seems to crystallise all the aspects of the theme of protection. In building up this metaphoric structure, the Beowulf-poet prepares his audience for the moment when the major thematic development takes place. The first important step toward this climax, Wiglaf's seeing the golden standard, is described in an image metrically akin to the overhead standard of King Scyld (47a-48a):

Swylce he siomian geseah segn eallgylden
heah ofer horde (2767a-68a)

The next step, Beowulf's request that his ashes be buried inside a mound erected in his memory, is expressed in the contexts of God's splendour and generosity and of national blessing. Familiar continuities reappear, and again they are adapted to exploit a new situation. Beowulf, for example, wants his burial mound heah hlifian (2805a), like a hall (81b-82a) or a ship's mast (1898b). Just as in the passages describing the building of Heorot there is an emphasis on startling creation, so God is again seen as the Creator of all things; and one is reminded of Caedmon's Hymn:

'Ic ðara frætwa Frean ealles ðanc,
Wuldurcynige, wordum secge,
ecum Dryhtne' (2794a-96a)

Beowulf, like Hrothgar, can give his people swylc him God sealde (72b), and together with Hrothgar's generosity his sincerely sorrowful farewell is also recalled. A whole new tone and movement have

been introduced at this point. In Beowulf's earlier speech in which he tells the heathen Danes how he put to sleep some sea-monsters,

þæt syðþan na
ymb brontne ford brimliðende
lade ne letton.

the lines

Leoht eastan com,
beorht beacen Godes; brimu swaþredon
þæt ic sænæssas geseon mihte
(567b-71b)

are not without reference to the final thematic development. These lines prefigure the spiritual significance of the cosmic events of the concluding fitts of the poem.

In his last words, when Beowulf orders built a mound to receive his ashes, and describes how seafarers will see his barrow on the headland, various lines of theme and various lines of metaphor converge simultaneously:

'Hatað heaðomære hlæw gewyrcean,
beorhtne æfter bæle æt brimes nosan;
se scel to gemyndum minum leodum
heah hliþian on Hronesnæsse,
þæt hit sæliðend syððan hatan
Biowulfes biorh, ða ðe brentingas
ofer floda genipu feorran drifað.'
(2802a-08b)

The Geats obey and build a huge mound on the headland, heah ond brad, / wegliðendum wide gesyne (3157b-58b), and the change is complete: Beowulf is no longer in the sea looking for the headland by the light of God's beacon; he himself is now the beacon that will guide and protect seafarers 'through the darkness of the sea.' As a memorial it will remind his people of his use of kingly power and of his success in battle, but, most of all, of his generous provision and 'zeal in their protection' (lofgeornost, 3182b). The allusion to beorhtne in contrast to genipu reminds us of the spiritual war between good and evil, and we are back in Denmark. 'Tall ships' will

speed from far across the sea, setting a course by Beowulf's barrow, se leoma shining ofer landa fela (311). The image of darkness recalls the nipende niht (547a) of Beowulf's adolescent swim, but here the darkness has been transferred to the sea, and this new image serves to express the spiritual significance of fighting with all one's strength through the 'dark' times, trusting in God's protection and knowing that there will be a 'light' at the other end. But the image has a much greater thematic wealth than this. The expression ofer floda genipu gets its force and significance from the whole metaphoric preparation in the poem of the theme of protection in a confluence of the seas of mortality, of time, and of morality.

There is the darkness of the unknown future of the Geatish nation. The first sustained use of marine imagery as a metaphoric vehicle to describe the mysteriousness of destiny occurs in the Proem, where the poem describes, in terms of the sea, the affinity between birth and death. As a baby, Scyld comes to the land of the Danes from out of the great vault, an image suggested by the metrical collocation of the two ideas of vastness and sound in ofer hronrade hyran scolde (10). Thus, the effect of the present participle in enne ofer yðe umborwesende (46) makes its impact in a durative and contrastive sense, 'a mere baby, alone among the rollers.' The poem seems to insist upon this emphasis on birth to offset the image of death, which indeed is the dominant image in the poem as a whole. Surrounded by treasures, King Scyld is represented as slowly slipping out into the domain of the tides, and beyond the sea of time into eternity. How real the poem's success is may be deduced from the following lines (the climax of the resonant unknown prepared for by the dramatic alternation of human feeling and action):

Nalles hi hine læssan lacum teodan,
 beodgestreonum, þon þa dydon,
 þe hine æt frumsceafta forð onsendon
 ænne ofer yðe umborwesende.
 Þa gyt hie him asetton segen gylðenne
 heah ofer heafod, leton holm beran,
 geafon on garsecg; him was geomor sefa,
 murnende mod. Men ne cunnon
 secgan to soðe, selerædende,
 hæled under heofenum, hwa þam hlæste onfeng.
 (43a-52b)

The sea seems to comment on the relentlessness of a man's destiny and on the immanence of change: the ebb and flow of the sea evokes a profound awareness of human mortality.

From a purely technical point of view, the association of supernatural birth and death within the first fifty lines is poetically very productive. It not only establishes the elemental spiritual range of the poem's oppositions, but also introduces the marine imagery which is so integral to the poem's thematic structure. Appreciation of the marine imagery is also vital to an understanding of the progressively greater emotional and artistic control with which the poem treats death. By associating death with the sense of an eternal unknown, provided by the image of floda genipu, the poem relates death (human) to the theme of protection (divine). The great solemnity and dignified lamentation attending Beowulf's death and burial is, moreover, while foreshadowed in the Proem's modulation of numerous marine and maritime images, essential to the pattern of tonal fluctuation at the end of the poem between epic and elegiac.

In the image of the embarkation of Beowulf from Geatland, two temporal opposites, death and life, eternity and time, are reconciled in the atmosphere of the same solemn mystery of an unknown destiny. Though Scyld's destination is not known, his destiny (gescaphwile, 26b) in the Lord's protection is; on the other hand, Beowulf's destination is known, but his fate, the main narrative concern of the poem, is

only beginning to be spun. Entertaining the sea as a symbol of both life and death, the poem fully perceives that the sea embodies the central Christian paradox which makes death a prerequisite of rebirth. In his communion with his soul before he goes to meet the Dragon, Beowulf thus receives the spiritual insight necessary to see into the cyclical nature of human life. As his own life approaches its end, the old sea-warrior is strangely comforted by the recollection of the exploits of his younger days:

'Ic geneððe fela
guða on geogoðe; gyt ic wylle,
frod folces weard, fæhðe secan,
mærdū fremman, gif mec se mansceaða
of eorðsele ut geseceð.'
(2511b-15b)

Later, with his last breath, Beowulf affirms his belief that his end is in his beginning:

'ealle wyrd forsweop
mine magas to metodsceaft,
eorlas on elne; ic him æfter sceal.'
(2814b-16b, with Kemble's emendation)

It is as if an ocean wind, rising from the vast and eternal flux like some primordial impulse of life, compels Beowulf back upon the chartless sea of his destiny, reviving in him the anticipation born of memory and desire. The poem has succeeded in reconciling the two elemental antitheses of life and death; and, not merely an individual life, but all human life would appear to be endless.

But the poem has already divided human society on Augustinian principles, and accordingly identified two races of human beings within it, namely, the sons of God and the sons of Satan. The symbol of all heathen societies in the poem is Heorot. The history of sea-engendered Heorot, then, represents the cyclical destiny of all heathen societies: 'Swylc was þeaw hyra, / hæpenra hyht; helle gemundon' (178b-79b). According to the ebb and flow of events, the Danish

nation is on the decline: the once strong and glorious nation is being swallowed by the sea from which it came. Significantly, the opening lines of the poem eulogise only the former glory of the Danes:

Hwæt we Gar-Dena in geardagum
 beodcyniga brym gefrunon,
 hu ða æþelingas ellen fremedon.

As their ancestors rose from the sea to greatness, so the Danes are returning to the sea. But they go to their eternal oblivion, too, since the slowly vanishing nation is a graphic representation not only of the rise and fall of political fortunes but also of the fate of all things in the ebb and flow of time. On the other hand, the sea, unconquered and comparatively eternal, images the pristine and eternal spirit of evil flowing through man's world. The description of a dark and desolate Heorot thus images the spiritual darkness and barrenness of a people degraded by the tyranny of sin. In the first fitt, the scop's song of the Creation is heard amid the hall-joy of the Danes, and the beauty and freedom of Nature seem to echo their merriment. But by juxtaposing the images of a hall surrounded by darkness and of the earth encircled by a freely ranging sea, the poem intimates the ironic reality of the Danes' captivity, for they are oblivious of the imminent assault. Hrothgar's Heorot, which, through Scyld, rose from the sea in freedom and splendour and power, represents a sad, humiliating, and poignant comment on the ethical code of a society of warriors whose slavish spirit is in strong contrast to that of their brave ancestors as well as to the lashing sea around them. Well might the nations of the world lament the decline of Heorot--

'Me wearð Grendles þing
 on minre eþeltyrf undyrne cuð;
 secgað sæliðend, þæt þæs sele stande,
 reced selesta, rinca gehwylcum

idel ond unnyt, siððan æfenleoht
 under heofenes hador beholen weorþeð.
 (409b-14b)

--for in its fall they may be reading their own (cf. 202a-04b).

The sea also images the spirit of an unconquerable mind bequeathed from generation to generation: the waves carry power from one shore to another and release a captive people. Hence, whereas the Danish nation is declining in heroic spirit, the vigorous young Geatish nation, embodied in Beowulf and his troop, is ascending. In a sense, the sea is eternal, the pattern of its movements gives the impression of eternity. The eternal ebb and flow of the sea suggests the idea of an unlimited life-flow, a continuum in which Nature unfolds itself in a pattern of birth and death cycles in which the sea participates as the medium for creation and destruction. Beneath the destructive and annihilating surface of the sea lie hidden in deep mystery the imponderable forces which renew life in the very wake of destruction. Yet if the sea is above the temporal flux of man's world, it is only an imperfect image of eternity, and in its ebb and flow is to found an image more analogous of history. Literally, the Beowulf-poem says that with the passage of time new kingdoms emerge from the sea while others return to it; metaphorically, that in the sea is the beginning and the end of mankind. On the ebb and flow of the tide, generations come and go. The sea is time rolling through the universe (under heofenum, 52a) and, like the sea, time is a force rolling through and acting on the world in a cyclic pattern. The sea once raised the Danes to freedom, glory, and empire, but in the cyclical pattern of all things the sceptre, or rather the standard, passes, and now on the other side of the sea a new power rises, its own glory to pass away in its turn. For, after a nation reaches its zenith of civilisation, power, renown, and wealth--for the Danes, it was in Scyld

Scefig's reign; for the Geats, in Beowulf Waegmunding's reign--it then descends into treachery and revenge, with the ultimate destruction of the nation's spirit by feuding.

In the cyclical turn of events, new kingdoms rise out of the ruins of the fallen. But the poem laments these events because, for the Christian, they express the lost concord, lost when Cain slew his brother Abel, among men; worse, they epitomise the great feud between God and Satan, of which the ruins of giants, a setting implied throughout the whole poem, are the best evidence. From the beginning of the poem, social harmony is associated with cosmic harmony: it is hierarchical order which declares the power of a God who assigned to each member of the universe its proper place and function, and who 'lif eac gesceop/ cynna gehwylcum, þara ðe cwise hwyrfaþ' (97b-98b). At the national level, the hierarchically ordered society is the basis of all harmony and the true expression of the Metod who watches over all Creation. Because the Danes do not know of their Maker's protection, they persist in doing evil. As Augustine says of the earthly city, 'Illa in suis potentibus diligit virtutem suam.'⁸⁴ The values of their society are those of faithlessness, and their belief in physical strength is really only the acceptance of their bondage in the powerful grip of Grendel. Beowulf, in fact, insinuates that there is a spiritual need in the souls of the Danes when he says (with sarcasm) that Grendel has realised

'æt he þa fahðe ne þearf,
 atole ecgþræce eower leode
 swiðe onsittan, Sige-Scyldinga.
 Nymeð nydbade, nænegum arað
 leode Deniga, ac he lust wigeð,
 swefeð ond sendeþ, secce ne weneþ
 to Gar-Denum.' (595b-601a)

⁸⁴ It 'loves its own strength as revealed in its men of power.'
The City of God, Bk 14.28, trans. Levine, pp. 406 and 407.

and then goes on to boast, in imagery consistent with his account of the swim with Breca:

'Gæþ eft se þe mot
to medo modig, sippan morgenleoht
ofer ylda bearn opres dogores,
sunne sweglwered supan scineð.'
(603b-06b)

In the dawn-image, Beowulf suggests to the Danes that it is only through God's protection that he can save them. The poem's statement is unequivocal: physical strength is dependent upon the power of God, and the heroic spirit succeeds in its physical strength only when it acts in the knowledge of the overruling power of God, the giver of that physical strength. Soon there is mirth in the hall once more, and as Wealtheow, cynna gemyndig (613b), takes round the cup, the picture of social harmony resumes.

Beowulf's speech in the debate underscores, in heroic terms, the relationship between need and protection. To accept, in an attitude of thanksgiving, the full responsibility of one's natural gifts is an act of worship; and Beowulf, by trusting in his God-given strength and leaving the outcome to God, repeatedly shows that he accepts this responsibility. To Beowulf, already favoured with the mightiest physical strength on earth, there is only one course of heroic action open, namely, the use of all his strength where it is most needed, for during this action divine power will 'radiate' its protection. In other words, the need creates an opportunity for heroic faith which, converted into action, creates an opportunity for divine action. Heroic protection thus has two components, the human and the divine, and righteous deeds of valour (eorlic ellen, 637a) are the imitation of divine protection.

And yet, after having said all this, when we come back to Beowulf's death, we see that even though, 'old and in pain' (2793a),

he thinks only of the provision and protection of his people, he nevertheless leaves his own nation ealdorleasne (3003a), i.e., in the same state as the Danes were in at the beginning of the poem (aldorlease, 15b), for, in a sense, the life of the land departs when the king dies (aldor of earde, 56a).⁸⁵ Indeed, the concluding fitts of Beowulf form a picture of funereal bleakness, an atmosphere of national doom and disaster. The cause of alarm among the Geats is that, without a king, they lack protection. Because its outcome is 'humiliation' (hynðo, 3155a; cf. 166a, 277a, 475a, 593a) for those for whom he gives his life, Beowulf's last victory is (apparently) futile and 'one of the bitterest ironies of the poem.'⁸⁶ But the poem leaves untold the destiny of Beowulf's people for the simple reason that, in the destiny of the Geats is epitomised the destiny of all nations of men, the implication being that the whole historical

⁸⁵ Cf. Stanley B. Greenfield, The Interpretation of Old English Poems (London and Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972): 'to see the meaning "lordless" here in application to the Geats, uncritically opens the door to the semantic world of Humpty-Dumpty' (p. 93). The hyperbole is perhaps unworthy of Greenfield's best criticism, but one shares his disease at a careless reading which overlooks that the ending is masc. sing. acc. Nevertheless, poetry has the power to imply itself beyond grammar to make new connections by the shortest routes to hand. In the lines "'syððan hie gefricgeað frean userne/ ealdorleasne"' (3002a-03a), the common -ne has the effect of closely associating the two ideas user and ealdorleas. Both 'lifeless' and 'lordless' are thus made particularly relevant by the pressure of the poem's cyclical rhythm. But see, too, Eugene R. Kintgen's important article, 'Echoic Repetition in Old English Poetry, especially The Dream of the Rood,' NM, 75, No. 2 (1974), 202-23.

⁸⁶ A. D. Horgan, 'Religious Attitudes in Beowulf,' in Essays and Poems Presented to Lord David Cecil, pref. W. W. Robson (London: Constable, 1970), p. 15. Historically, as R. T. Farrell shows, the Geats (presuming they were the Gautar) were probably 'gradually dominated by the [Swedes], and . . . gradually subsumed into the larger kingdom of Sweden' ('Beowulf, Swedes and Geats,' Saga-Book of the Viking Society for Northern Research, 18, No. 3, 1972, 270). Cf. Brodeur, The Art of Beowulf, p. 131. But Greenfield's critical appraisal of the issue, 'Geatish History: Poetic Art and Epic Quality in Beowulf,' should also be consulted.

process of battles, victory, defeat, and feuding will repeat itself in an (apparently) endless cyclical succession--"Pæt ys sio fashō ond se feondscipe, / wælnið wera" (2999a-3000a)--until the apocalyptic prophecy is fulfilled, that the rulers of the earth will assemble 'in praelium ad diem magnum omnipotentis Dei' (Apocalypse 16.14).

The point, then, seems to be this: that though Beowulf's death and the loss of Geatish glory are lamentable events, they are merely another stage in the cyclical succession of the kingdoms of the earth which, in any event, are all heading for destruction. It is better for the Geats to look back to the acme of their God-given power, and not in fear either, but with the joy such as seafarers experience who see a familiar beacon in the darkness of the night. According to patristic exegesis, rulers of the earth are often called giants in the Bible; for example, Gregory, explaining 'Ecce gigantes gemunt sub aquis' (Job 26.5), says that:

Si autem gigantum nomine potentes hujus saeculi designantur, in aquis possunt populi figurari, Joanne attestante, qui ait: Aquae enim sunt populi. 87

Again, in the apocryphal Fourth Book of Esdras, we read how the kings of the earth, having gathered together in order to make war on the man who rises from the sea, will be destroyed by the stream of fire he pours out of his mouth (13.5, 10). Esdras is dumbfounded by this vision of the sea:

Dominator Domine, hoc mihi ostende, propter quod vidi virum ascendentem de corde maris. Et dixit

87 But if by the name of 'the giants' the powerful ones of this world are denoted, in 'the waters' we may have the multitudes represented, as John beareth witness, who saith, The waters, which thou seest, are peoples.

mihi: Sicut non potes haec vel scrutari, vel scire
 quae sunt in profundo maris: sic non poterit quis-
 que super terram videre filium meum, vel eos qui
 cum eo sunt, nisi in tempore diei. (13.51-52)

As the eotenas were 'waved' by Beowulf, so the figurative giants of the earth will be destroyed by the sea; that is, the heathen kings of the world will be swept into hell by God on the fateful day when He gives them an endelean/ burh wæteres wylm (1692b-93a), for 'na bið gehæled cyning þurh micel mægen 7 gigant na bið gehæled on mænigeo mægenes his.'⁸⁸ If one has been at all alive to the omnipresent overtones of the eschatological statement made for the first time in the second fitt of the poem, the thought of the final judgement of mankind comes as a necessary implication of the poem's concluding fitts with their foreboding and doom. But if Beowulf's death establishes itself as a point in the past, it also points to the future. And this brings us back to our original image, ofer floda genipu.

The future is 'seen through' the commonplaces of the sea already established in the poem: the sea has power and deadliness, satanic evil and (relative) eternity. One immediate effect of the juxtaposing of these subjects of the metaphor is that the state of the future is instantaneously observed as a deep and dark sea. Hence the word flod assumes a new denotation with sinister overtones, that of 'the black future.' The connotations assumed by the word flod in its dark aspect have profound effects on the meaning of the image. The darkness or obscurity of the sea has connotations of blindness and coldness as well as of fear, treachery, and surprise attack, especially in association with feuds. This association is made explicit in the

⁸⁸ Psalm 32.16, The Vitellius Psalter, ed. Rosier, p. 74.
 Cf. Isaiah 24.21-22.

recounting of Hygelac's successful Swedish raid and the probable repercussions. The reference to geomormod (3018a), morgenceald (3022a), and se wonna hrefn (3024b) have an important effect on the connotations of genipu, for the future is represented as not merely dark and unknown, but as being like defeat and destruction. Moreover, when we look at the metaphor in the context of the whole poem, we find these connotations explicitly strengthened by the poem's references to the dangerous nature of the dark, which diabolically preys on men when they have already 'driven far across the day,' i.e., not merely at night but near death. The metaphor expresses, then, the unknown future of the Geats in terms of the dangers of the sea and the role of men as blind victims.

Insofar as the events in it are produced by the irruption into the natural universe by the supernatural war between good and evil, the Beowulf-poem is concerned with a feud whose dimensions extend farther than the merely historical. For, by allying the dangers of the sea with the forces of evil in the headland setting of the burial-mound, which shines forth its message of a royal presence, the poem recasts Beowulf's mound as a standard⁸⁹ signifying the divinely-bestowed victory of heroic faith in action against the satanic evil in middangeard. And the sons of God need His protection in the battles with other giants on earth, and, on the personal

⁸⁹ According to Bede, the type of standard carried in front of the newly converted Edwin was called a tufa by the Romans and a thuuf by the English (HEGA, Bk 2.16, Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People, ed. and trans. Bertram Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969, p. 192), rendered segn and tacn in the Anglo-Saxon version of Bede (ed. Thomas Miller, EETS, OS 95, 1890; rpt. London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1959, pp. 144, 146). The Old Norse cognate is þufa 'mound' (An Icelandic-English Dictionary, ed. Richard Cleasby and Gudbrand Vigfusson, 2nd ed., rev. William A. Craigie, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957, s.v.). Cf. sigeþufas (Judith, ASPR, IV, 201b).

level, 'Gigans superbus aliquis est, extollens se adversus Deum, velut quia est ipse aliquid in se et per se.'⁹⁰ But the mound also suggests that, while victory is a gift of God, there are higher goods 'quae ad supernam pertinent civitatem.'⁹¹ And it is on this deeper level of meaning that the poem approaches its final statement.

In the Burial of Scyld Scefing, the gleam of his golden standard is probably the last thing the Danes see of their king. It thus betokens not only kingship but also death, and as such it represents the eternal. Carried out to sea, the standard indicates a constant current beneath the normal tidal movement of time, and may be seen as signifying the point of intersection of the temporal and the eternal. By analogy, Beowulf's barrow (becn, 3160a) radiates a light from outside of time that shows men a constant protective power free from the tidal sway of the sea. Both symbols, then, Scyld's standard and Beowulf's barrow, signify a life beyond death, the important difference between the two heroes being that, whereas Scyld is only setting out for the protection of the Lord when the poem begins, Beowulf is already there by the time the poem ends.

It is through such links as these that the poem concentrates at this climactic moment the fullest meaning of the thematic metaphor, though there is of course no discontinuity in the audience's experience of the thematic meaning and the metaphoric qualification. The images that recur in Beowulf's death-speech take us back to

⁹⁰ 'A giant is any proud man, lifting up himself against God, as though he were something in himself and by himself.' Augustine Enarrationes in Psalmos, Ps. 32.16, CL 38.270; trans. [J. E. Tweed], Expositions on the Book of Psalms, A Library of Fathers, No. 24, I (Oxford: Parker, 1847), 337.

⁹¹ 'that belong to the city above.' Augustine, The City of God, Bk 15.4, trans. Levine, pp. 426 and 427.

qualities experienced in particular thematic contexts: brentingas (2807b), for instance, carries us back to the ships that sailed ymb brontne ford (568a) which, in his youth, Beowulf freed from the attacks of sea-monsters. But it also reminds us of the energetic arrival of the Geats in Denmark and Hrothgar's startled coastguard describing their impressive ship as a brontne ceol (238b). Once again, we see Beowulf overcoming the deep sea through heroic faith in his God-given strength converted into effective protection. Thematic and metaphoric structures are perfectly integrated.

We can now realise that the sea's possession is the main aspect of the poem's thematic metaphor. Through the recurrence in Beowulf's last speech of various lines of metaphor, the poem makes us see each thematic development as a protective liberation, whether it is the Danes being freed from Grendel's tyranny, or God's beacon dispelling the night, or Beowulf's breaking the Mere's hold on Heorot. But the union of theme and metaphor reaches its fullest expression in the image of Beowulf's barrow as a beacon shining for ships at night, guiding them from 'across the dark sea' and protecting them 'against the sea's darkness.'

The larger meaning of the poem's total design, which was foreshadowed in Beowulf's metaphor of himself as the heroic sea destroying the giants, is most clearly and fully achieved in this final metaphor. When, in his figurative interpretation of the first chapter of the Book of Genesis, Augustine wants to assign a meaning to the dry land, he says:

Ac per hoc in verbo tuo non maris profunditas, sed
ab aquarum amaritudine terra discreta eicit . . .
animam vivam. neque enim iam opus habet baptismo,
quo gentibus opus est, sicut opus habebat, cum aquis
tegeretur . . . iam distincta [est] terra fidelis

ab aquis maris infidelitate amaris 92

The 'bitter waters' are all the societies of earth's heathen humanity, the faithless. Augustine goes on to enjoin the faithful, who stand 'in arida discreta a gurgitibus abyssi',⁹³ to avoid completely the ways of this world, for then they will be remade 'in novitate mentis',⁹⁴ which will give life to the soul. The Augustinian exegesis of a Scriptural passage so familiar to an Anglo-Saxon audience makes Beowulf clearly identifiable with the faithful, while the spiritual metamorphosis is consistent with the surrounding changes in the narrative. As we have already seen, Beowulf's soul goes to join the congregation of the saints; now, in terms of the thematic movement just pointed out, it passes from the possession of the sea (flodes eht) to the keeping of the Lord (Frean ware).

The burial-mound contains ashes and treasures, and it points to the need of a nation for royal protection. 'In the end [Beowulf] had himself to die and leave his Geats unprotected. The true

92 It is not the deep sea but the dry land segregated from the bitter waters that, at the bidding of your Word, produces . . . the living soul. This is because the earth no longer needs baptism as it did when it was covered by the waters and as the heathen need it still . . . The dry land, which has faith, has now been set apart from the waters of the sea, which are bitter because they do not believe.

Confessiones, Bk 13.21.29, ed. Martin Skutella, *Bibliotheca Scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana*, rev. ed. Heiko Jürgens and Wiebke Schaub (1934; Stuttgart: B. G. Teubner, 1969), p. 350, ll. 9-19; trans. R. S. Pine-Coffin, Saint Augustine: Confessions (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1961), p. 329.

93 'upon dry land that stands high above the swirling waters of the sea.' Ibid., Bk 13.21.30, Skutella, p. 351, ll. 19-20; trans. Pine-Coffin, p. 330.

94 'in newness of mind.' Ibid., Bk 13.22.32, Skutella, p. 353, ll. 9-10; translation mine.

salvation was still to come. This is the sense in which Beowulf is a Christian poem; its Christianity is not extraneous but central to a true understanding of its meaning.⁹⁵ The burial-mound stands shining on a promontory and symbolises the need of mankind for Godes leoht (2469b). Thus, in the image of Beowulf's barrow overlooking the sea, there is focused God's protective grace for all unbelievers. Moreover, both needs are fulfilled in Christ, the Light of the world. Though he is never explicitly mentioned in the poem, the metaphoric structure would allow such an interpretation. For the sun has been firmly fixed in the audience's memory as a physical sign of God's protective power, and through the use of it as the victorious Cross, God reveals Himself as mankind's protector in man's struggle against satanic angels, visible and invisible. The sun, triumphant in the firmament, suggests (to a Christian audience) the Cross as a symbol of the eternal kingdom of heaven. The idea of protection in the Proem, too, is transformed from a national to a universal concern in the fight against evil in all its forms. Again, Beowulf's victory over Grendel's mother is made possible through the power of the symbolised Cross, for Beowulf is a Christian warrior in the sense that his ultimate enemy in Denmark is not the Grendels but Satan. In this context, of Beowulf's fighting in God's cause and under His protection, it is appropriate that the golden standard is buried with him. The standard then becomes the symbol of the invincible human soul enjoying divine protection for ever.

⁹⁵ G. C. Britton, 'Unferth, Grendel and the Christian Meaning of Beowulf,' NM, 72, No. 2 (1971), 250.

(vii)

The struggle in Beowulf is, in its broadest moral terms, the relentless war between good and evil, a war manifested on two historical levels and dimensions, the national and the individual, the temporal and the eternal. The poem moves in an allusive way that implies a sea of myriad causes and effects deriving from the actions of whole nations and individual characters. Although the effects of men's actions are often invisible, they do cause the society to change subtly. Men's actions are largely the results of all the past actions of all men of the sea of humanity; therefore, a man's choices and decisions now will affect the future. The poem expresses a belief in man's ability to choose and in man's ability to pursue his sense of justice for the good of all through noble action. Indeed, the Beowulf-poem brings together several historical, legendary, and fabulous predicaments, each presenting variations of the theme of protection. As we move from one situation to the next, we find a narrowing and a corresponding spiritualising of the theme's context: the poem opens with the whole Danish nation surrounding their king's treasure-bedecked body; it closes with twelve Geatish horsemen circling their king's buried ashes. The ending of the poem, with its emphasis on the struggle for gold, the dark sea of feud, and the beacon, mirrors yet again the opening scene of the burial of Scyld in which his gleaming golden standard carries his power out across the unknown ocean. What was only an heroic emblem of power and protection has transformed the sign of divine power and protection into a symbol of spiritual victory in the struggle for individual human souls.

The pattern of metaphoric continuities is a complex one, and arises from Beowulf's realisation of his, and all men's, total

dependence on the protective grace of God. Thus, human strength and divine protection become attached to the golden standard; need and fear remain the portion of those who, like the craven ten, inhabit the darkness of faithlessness. The strength of men, however, is naturally limited, and so its deliberate contrast in the poem with the power of God points up God's eternal protection. As in his fights with the Grendels, only Beowulf, the strongest man, can end the Dragon's long hoarding of the gold--hoarding is itself an evil kind of protection--but greater than any man's strength and longer than any dragon's guardianship is God's power and His protection of the souls of men.

The basic thematic idea of Beowulf is the hero's quest, through mortal time, for eternal glory in terms of heroic protection (lof-dædum). The poet's own purpose superimposes itself on this, for, in arranging the basic subject into two contrasting but dependent themes--the main theme of eternal protection and the counter-theme of temporal protection--the poet has to reconcile his subject-matter with his poetic (Christian) intention. In each of the sea passages, these themes are introduced and developed in such a way that the poet's ideas, as he moves closer to Beowulf's ultimate reality, are expanded in an amplifying pattern from passage to passage. The two opposing themes are synthesised in the idea that the Christian can perceive and enjoy eternal protection only through his experience in the temporal world. The themes, in turn, are projected in terms of dominant images which either vary or are reiterated in expanded form. The main theme of eternal protection most often recurs as the sun or bright light overhead and as the sea close to land's edge in which the poem catches glimmerings of ultimate reality. The subordinate theme of temporal protection manifests itself in a variety of forms:

e.g., the presence and passing of kings, the fragility of peace by a marriage contract whose end is feud, and the building and burning of Heorot. The Unferth intermezzo provides an excellent illustration of how the poem presents these two related but contrasting themes in the form of dominant images. Heorot, in symbolising the human body in its mortal condition,⁹⁶ represents the temporal protection theme, while the ubiquitous sea represents the eternal protection theme in that it makes us aware of the vast time (since the Creation) that surrounds the hall. The two themes are presented separately, then they are developed together as contrasting modes (especially in the Mere-Fight), and finally the sea theme of eternity asserts its dominance as a destroyer and protector of life and time. There are, then, two larger, logically opposed yet historically advancing, units whose common theme serves to insist upon their contrast, and which are recapitulated and reconciled in the final solemnity of Beowulf's burial. The last image of the poem is a thematic vortex-ring produced by the closed curve of the theme of protection, and it presents this ambiguity: that the heathen can see in the mound only the loss of the king's protection of his people, while the godly can see in it also the triumph of God's protection of all men.

⁹⁶ See Greenfield's brilliant discussion of recedes muban (724a) in The Interpretation of Old English Poems, pp. 36-37.

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FULLFREMME

ΘΕΩΙ ΜΟΝΩΙ ΔΟΞΑ

CVRRICVLVM VITAE

Personal

NATVS EST LEONARDO IACOBO ET IRENAE BIANCAE QVINTO DIE AVG XLVIII
MOWBRAY IN VRBE CAPENSI. DVXIT VXOREM MARYTHAM OCTAVO DIE IAN
LXXII EX QVA ACCEPIT FILIAM ESTHER LYDIAM DVODEVICENSIMO DIE
AVG LXXIV.

Educational and Academic

Mowbray Primary School, 1954-60
St Joseph's College, Rondebosch, 1961-65
Anti-Aircraft Training Centre, Youngsfield, 1966
University of Cape Town: BA, 1969; BA (Hons, I), 1970
Department of English, UCT: Junior Lecturer, 1971-72, 1974
Jesus College, Cambridge: English Tripos, October 1974-

Awards

Class Medal and William Rollo Prize for Latin, 1968
F. G. Connock Post-Graduate Scholarship, October 1974-

Publications

- 'True North: The Magnetic Myth' [poem]. Ophir, No. 15 (Dec. 1971),
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